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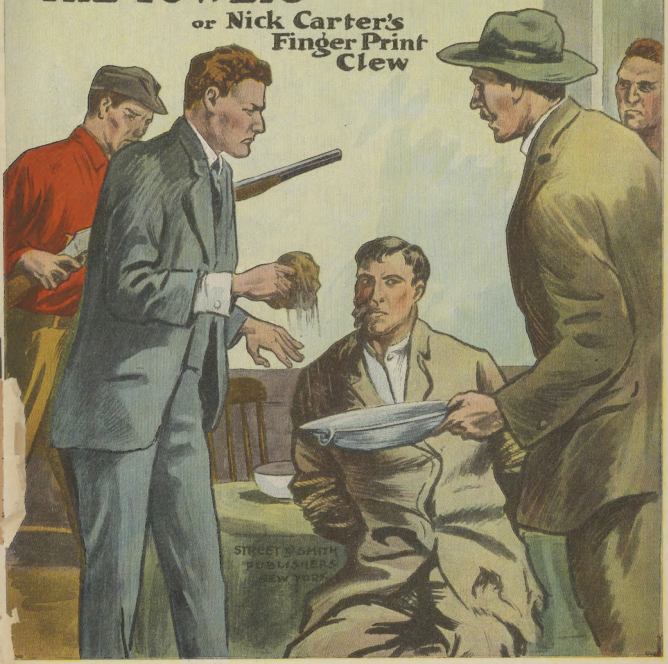
Nick Carter Stories

THE CRIME IN THE TOWER

or Nick Carter's Finger Print Clew



NICK CARTER STORIES

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THE CRIME IN THE TOWER;

Or, NICK CARTER'S FINGER-PRINT CLEW.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

A HOBO OF QUALITY.

Nick Carter waited and watched them while they arrested the man.

"By Jove, he certainly looks like the breaking up of a hard winter," said the detective to himself. "Down and out and all to the bad don't half express it."

He appeared, plainly enough, to be a tramp of the very lowest degree of trampdom. He was clad like a scarecrow in a beanfield. Part of the collar of his woolen shirt was missing. His coat was fastened at his breast with a large safety pin, there being no button. His trousers were baggy and nearly in shreds. His shoes, or what was left of them, were not mates. His derby hat was of ancient vintage and minus part of the crown.

He was unkempt and begrimed with dirt. A beard of a week's growth bristled on his chin and cheeks. He was as sinister and hangdog-looking a specimen of the genus homo, or hobo, as one would meet in a month's journey.

He had trudged his weary way into Shelby along about six o'clock in the evening, that of a perfect June day.

He would have avoided that active and prosperous town amid the foothills of the Alleghanies, perhaps, had he known it then was the center of much lawlessness and disorder, which was the occasion for Nick Carter's presence in that locality.

The tramp had trudged in over the S. & O. Railway tracks, but he had scarcely set foot in the public square in the heart of the town when he was gobbled up by a county sheriff and a policeman, both of whom collared him about the same time. Forthwith the trio immediately became the center of attraction for a score or two of observers, the famous New York detective among them.

The tramp evidently objected to being arrested, yet he met the situation with a certain amount of grim humor, that speedily brought broad grins to the faces of his numerous hearers.

"Say, what's eating you two ginks?" he demanded, while they stood on the curbing and waited for the wagon. "Are you getting flighty in the bean? Ain't I got a right to walk through your blooming old burg? Nothing short of a stiff would stay long in it. Lemmo go and I'll get out."

"You'll get what's coming to you instead," snapped the policeman, one Jerry Dawson. "The likes of you have no rights in these parts, and you ought to have found it out before you came in."

"As you will before you go out," supplemented Nat Norton, the sheriff.

The hobo turned and gazed at him with a scornful leer.

"Is that so?" he sneered. "Seems to me your ivory is bulging out around your bonnet. You'll bust it if your bean keeps swelling. What are you, anyway? Are you the main guy of the place?"

"It's enough for you, my man, that I'm the county sheriff," said Norton sternly.

"You be!" The hobo laughed derisively. "You ought to be keeper of the pound, the dog catcher, or any old thing like that. You guys give me a pain in the side."

"We'll give you a pain in the head when we get you under cover," muttered the policeman, irritated by the laughter of the observers.

"You will!" sneered the hobo, undaunted. "Wow, wow, but you're the big squeeze, for fair, when you've got things all your own way. You're the geezer with the gun, eh? The gink what makes a home run when the bases are full. Say, you ought to be——"

"You keep your trap closed!" Dawson interrupted, between his teeth.

"I guess not!" persisted the tramp. "No bull of your size ever closed my trap. Skidoo for you! If I had a

red wipe, I'd flirt it right under your lamps. It's nuts for me to harass a bull. Close my trap, eh? Not if my dukes are free. I'm some chamois pusher myself. You wouldn't last a minute."

"Wait and see."

"Ain't I waiting? I'm right here with a wait. But I'm no dumb-waiter, you can bet on that. Nix on that close-your-trap gag. I'll shoot my spiel as long as I've got the breath."

"See here——"

"Oh, cut out your beefing! Your watch might stop, and you'd be docked for loss of time. Get on to the gazabos grinning at you. They're wondering why you're taking in a gent of my cloth."

"You'll go in, my man, and in to stay," threatened the sheriff.

"Not in the Shelby caboose, old socks, you can bet on that," leered the tramp. "That old shack wouldn't hold water. I dunno whatever steered me into this burg. It's as dead as a country bone yard. 'Tain't even on the map. 'Tain't a flyspeck on the chart of creation. You two ginks are like a pair of fleas on a valley dog's back. You're as yaller, too, as——"

"Shut up!" cried Sheriff Norton, seizing the hobo by the throat and fiercely shaking him. "You open your mouth again and I'll knock your block off."

The tramp refastened the safety pin that held his dilapidated coat together, then grinned at the throng of men that had formed a circle around the trio.

All of them appeared deeply amused and in sympathy with the poor devil. Some of them were of as sinister aspect as himself, roughly clad, dark-featured fellows, with evil in their eyes and desperation plainly reflected in their grim faces. Several wore flannel shirts, with their trousers upheld with leather belts, while the bulging of their sack coats over their hips smacked strongly of ready weapons.

They grinned back at the tramp, who now stood scratching his swarthy, bewhiskered chin, and the brief lull in this open-air vaudeville turn at popular prices was ended by the rapid approach of a wagon with two burly policemen in it, who sprang out and bundled in the tramp with a celerity that caused some of the observers to wonder.

Two of the men in the crowd reached for their guns, as if impelled to lend the tramp a hand and pull him out of his scrape, but they evidently thought better of it, and in another moment the wagon was rattling away to the county jail, with the hobo in the grip of the two ponderous policemen.

Nick Carter moved on with no apparent interest beyond that felt by the other observers.

Had he been walking up Broadway, or descending the steps of his own Madison Avenue residence, his most intimate friend would not have recognized him.

Nick was clad in a suit of clerical black, a long frock coat, quite rusty and in need of pressing. He wore a broad felt hat that was dusty and out of shape. He wore a wig and beard, both shot with gray, also a pair of black-rimmed spectacles. He carried a leather grip, worn and defaced, and had under his arm a portfolio containing specimen pages and bindings of an encyclopedia, an agent for the sale of which he was pretending to be. He had arrived in Shelby half an hour before the tramp.

Nick did not look as if fortune had smiled upon him. He looked as if he had seen his share of hard sledding, and as if first-class hotels were utterly beyond his means.

Nick was in little danger of incurring suspicion, therefore, when he turned from the square and sought an inferior hotel in one of the side streets, where he registered as Abner Hadley, Philadelphia, and paid a week in advance for a room on the second floor.

It was seven o'clock when Nick came out from supper. He found the office, barroom, and café thronged with men of rough type, day laborers, stonecutters from the quarries, farmers from the suburbs, herders from among the foothills, mountaineers of doubtful occupation and lawless character, all a noisy and nondescript class. Liquor was flowing freely. The air was hazy with smoke from corncobs and stogies. There was a babel of tongues in noisy conversation on all sides.

Nick sauntered into the barroom.

Two men at one of the sloppy tables were discussing a recent murder in a signal tower on the S. & O. Railway, but the detective rightly decided after listening briefly that they knew nothing definite about the crime. His attention, moreover, was diverted by a shout from one of several rough fellows seated around another table.

"Hey, there, you biscuit shooter, fill up these glasses!"

One of the waiters outside of the bar hastened to obey the vociferous command. He was a quick, energetic chap, sturdy and muscular, and nearly as dark as a mulatto.

Nick took a vacant chair at a small table in one corner, and presently the same energetic waiter came to take his order.

"A cigar and a mug of ale," Nick said curtly, without looking up.

The waiter went to get them and presently returned, lingering to wipe the table, while Nick pretended to have difficulty in finding the exact amount of change.

In the meantime, though neither looked at the other, a few quick whispers passed between them. Nick began with asking:

"Anything doing?"

"Not yet."

"Seen Barclay?"

"Tuesday."

"You told him?"

"That you would arrive to-day."

"Enough said. See me later. Second floor, room No. 23. Skidoo."

"Bet you!"

The waiter whisked his towel over his arm and flew to the bar with the money just received. He had wandered into Shelby a week before, down at the heels and out of a job. He had, as appears, succeeded in finding one, that of "beer slinger" and "biscuit shooter" in the Reddy House. It was not an enviable job—quite the contrary; but it was the job he wanted.

The waiter was Nick Carter's junior assistant—Patsy Garvan.

Ten minutes after the brief episode in the barroom Nick Carter walked out of the house with his portfolio under his arm, ostensibly seeking business and attracting no observable attention. He had made sure of the last.

Proceeding precisely as if he had no ulterior object in view, Nick sought the most desirable residential section of Shelby, where he called upon a Baptist clergyman, from whom he vainly tried to get an order for one of

his "new and thoroughly up-to-date Anglo-American Encyclopedias."

Nick was not at all disappointed in not obtaining the order, which he could not possibly have filled.

Apparently with the same object in view, nevertheless, he then hastened to the handsome Elmwood Avenue residence of the Honorable Kimball Barclay, the judge of the municipal court and corporation counsel for the S. & O. Railway Co., and one of the wealthiest and most influential men of Shelby. Judge Barclay glanced at the card brought in by the butler, then directed him to admit the visitor to his library.

Nick found him alone in the handsomely furnished room. He saw that the butler closed the door, then noticed that the window shades were closely drawn. He then removed his disguise and extended his hand, saying:

"Good evening, judge. I am strictly on time, you see."

Judge Barclay laughed and warmly pressed the detective's hand.

He was a portly, dignified man of sixty, with strong, smoothly shaved features, evincing culture, sterling character, and an inflexible will.

"Welcome, Nick, a thousand times over," he said cordially. "I have been expecting you. Sit down and——"

"One moment, judge," Nick interposed. "While I think of it and before we proceed to business, there is one matter I wish to impress upon your mind."

"Certainly. What is that?"

"I saw a tramp arrested this afternoon by the county sheriff and a policeman. He was a most disreputable-looking dog. He will come before you in the municipal court to-morrow morning, I suppose."

"Yes, surely," bowed the magistrate, with a puzzled expression.

"I want you to give him thirty days in the Shelby jail."

"Thirty days, eh? He will be lucky to be let down with that. I will do so, however."

"Very good," smiled Nick. "I will do the rest."

"The rest?" echoed Judge Barclay, gazing. "What do you mean, Nick? What are you driving at?"

Nick laughed, then replied impressively:

"Not a word of it to others, Barclay. That tramp, the disreputable-looking dog, is my chief assistant, Chick Carter."

CHAPTER II.

THE DETECTIVE CRAFT.

Such extraordinary steps as those depicted must denote, plainly enough, that Nick Carter and his assistants were engaged in a remarkably important and extremely hazardous case. The nature of it appeared in the private conference held that evening by the famous detective and the judge of the local court.

Nick accepted a cigar, and took one of the armchairs, saying while he tossed his charred match into the fireplace:

"Now, Judge Barclay, before telling you what I have done and why I have done it, I want you to run over again the statements you made when we met in Philadelphia a week ago. I wish to be sure that I remember all of the known facts and circumstances."

"Very well," Judge Barclay responded. "These crimes and outrages, Nick, began about eight weeks ago. They are the direct result in most cases, I feel sure, of the opposition of numerous lawless miscreants to the Shelbyville branch road of about eighteen miles, that is to be built by the S. & O. Our railway is, as you know, the most important, prosperous, and progressive road in this part of the country."

"I know all about the S. & O. Railway, judge," Nick interposed. "Let's confine ourselves to the criminal side of the matter. That's the only side you want me to look into. What occasions this antagonism to the Shelbyville branch?"

"That may be briefly stated," Judge Barclay replied. "The branch is to run through an unopened section of the country among the foothills and flanking the mountain range. It is a section that long has been infested with a scattered population of the worst kind, a lawless and desperate class, and engaged in no end of evil vocations, from the making of moonshine whisky to the banding together in secret gangs for all sorts of lawless depredations."

"I follow you," Nick nodded.

"Ostensibly, of course, these squatters are engaged in legitimate rural occupations, but under the surface they are a bad lot, an infernally bad lot. They are by far the worst element in the State."

"They do not, I infer, want that section of the country opened up?" said Nick.

"That is the very point—the one and only reason for their vicious antagonism. They know that the building of the branch will bring other settlers, that a decent community will quickly spring up, and they are vigorously opposed to anything that will tend to check their own lawless doings. We are determined to build through the gap to Shelbyville, nevertheless, let come what may, and construction on that end of the branch already is under way. That is what set the criminal ball rolling."

"These crimes and outrages began, you say, about eight weeks ago?"

"Yes. They began with threatening letters and rudely printed placards, the latter being posted in various parts of our property."

"I see."

"None bear any signature, however, nor contain anything that gives us a clew to the identity of the outlaws," Judge Barclay continued. "They threaten destruction of our railway, nevertheless, and death to its employees. The scoundrels have been getting in their work, too, and our local police and detectives appear utterly unable to cope with them, as I informed you in Philadelphia."

"I already had read some of the newspaper stories of the matter," Nick remarked. "There seems to be a veritable reign of terror on the S. & O. line."

"It has become nothing less, Nick, I assure you," Judge Barclay said gravely. "The outrages began with an attempt to dynamite the Willow Creek Bridge, six miles out of Shelby. A bomb with a time fuse was planted under one of the piers. The intention evidently was to destroy the bridge and wreck the Washington Limited, which arrived on the scene only eight minutes after the explosion, which had been heard for miles."

"Were there any fatalities?"

"No. Fortunately, the train was held up in time to prevent a disaster, and the damage did not prove to be

great. The outlaws evidently underestimated the strength of the pier."

"How long ago did that occur?"

"Something like six weeks."

"Continue."

"Two days later a freight train was derailed near Amherst. The engineer and a brakeman were seriously injured, and our property was damaged several thousand dollars. No trace of the criminals could be found. On the following night, Nick, the Southern Express was held up at Shelby Junction. Half a dozen masked men, heavily armed, went through the two parlor cars and robbed every passenger, afterward making their escape without a shot having been fired."

"Is anything definite known about them?"

"No. Bloodhounds were used with a view to tracking them, but their trail was lost at Willow Creek, where the outlaws evidently took to the water. The identity of none of them is known."

"Nor suspected?"

"No, nor suspected. These bandits have invariably succeeded in covering their tracks."

"Have there been many other like outrages?"

"Nearly a score, Nick, of one kind or another," said Judge Barclay. "Our force of track hands has been more than doubled, which has served to prevent the scoundrels from again attempting to wreck our trains. But their depredations along the line have continued. Several stations have been broken into and robbed. Our night watchman at Dayton was viciously assaulted, his money and watch taken, and he was left tied to a tree near the station."

"He knew none of his assailants?"

"No. All were masked. On the same night the safe in the Tamworth station was blown open and looted. The station agent was nearly killed.

"Night after night, in fact, in one locality or another, these crimes have continued, culminating ten days ago with the murder of Karl Glidden, night operator in the block-signal tower at Shelby Crossing, less than a mile out of the town."

"H'm! Bad indeed!"

"It was then that I advised our board of directors to employ you and your assistants, and I wrote you to meet me in Philadelphia, the board having given me chief charge of these investigations. I will mention other cases, and give you all of the details if you want them, though I——"

"That will not be necessary, judge, at this time," Nick interposed. "I have known in a general way for some little time what has been going on down here. Who, except the S. & O. board of directors, knows that I am employed in this case?"

"I alone, Nick, I feel sure," said Judge Barclay. "I imposed absolute secrecy upon our several directors, and I have not confided in any one else."

"Are the directors reliable?"

"Yes, absolutely; every man of them."

"Very good," said Nick. "I prefer just now that my connection with the case shall not be published."

"I will take additional steps to prevent it."

"The main thing to start with, of course, is to discover the identity of one or more of these outlaws. I will undertake to do so."

"That is what we want."

"I have observed in many such cases as these," Nick went on, "that the work of the police and detectives fails because they do not concentrate their forces upon a single crime and sift it to the bottom. They tackle them as fast as they occur, instead, going from one to another with almost inordinate haste, and bestow upon each only a superficial investigation from which nothing definite could possibly be derived."

"There is much truth in that," Judge Barclay agreed.

"Naturally, of course, they succeed only in accumulating a vast amount of indefinite evidence and circumstances, neither orderly arranged nor properly considered, and only a snarl follows, and their work falls flat."

"Exactly."

"Instead, therefore, I shall take up only one of these crimes, to begin with, and make sure that no clew escapes me that might otherwise be overlooked."

"I see the point."

"The identification of the crooks in one crime will probably lead to the discovery of all of the others," Nick added.

"Undoubtedly, Nick, with you at the helm," said Judge Barclay. "Which of these crimes will you investigate?"

"The one last committed."

"That was the killing of Karl Glidden, the signal-tower operator."

"Ten days ago?"

"Yes."

"What can you tell me about it?"

"All that is known about it," said Judge Barclay promptly. "I have made it a point to collect all of the data relating to these crimes, anticipating that you would want it."

"We will confine ourselves to the Glidden murder," Nick replied. "Tell me all you know about it."

Judge Barclay arose and unlocked his library safe, taking from it a large package of document envelopes, from which he selected the one containing the data bearing upon the case in question. Resuming his seat, he said gravely:

"This murder was committed about ten o'clock, Nick, on the night of June second. The victim, Karl Glidden, was a German who had been in the employ of the S. & O. Railway for three years. He was twenty-six years old, had no relatives in this country, and was a man of exemplary habits. He was the night operator in the block-signal tower at Shelby Crossing, just beyond a north outskirt of the town. He was faithful and reliable. So much for the man himself."

"Now, judge, about the crime," Nick remarked.

"The first intimation of the crime was received by Joseph Sampson, train dispatcher in the Shelby station, less than two miles from the signal tower," Judge Barclay continued. "Sampson was seated at his office table just before ten o'clock, when he heard the familiar Q — K C call from his telegraph ticker, informing him that the operator in the K C tower wanted to communicate with him."

"Well?"

"Sampson hastened to answer the call, then listened. The ticker was silent for several seconds, and then, in a jerky, disconnected way, evincing the unsteadiness of the operator in the tower, Karl Glidden's last earthly communication came over the wire."

"You have a copy of it?"

"Yes. I will read it to you."

"Do so."

"Though immediately alarmed and somewhat excited, Sampson noted it down on paper word for word," said Judge Barclay, while taking a sheet of yellow paper from an envelope. "Listen. This was Glidden's death message."

"I am all ears," said Nick.

Judge Barclay read it—this death message of the man murdered in the K C signal tower. It was as follows:

"'Send help. Rush. Am dying. Assaulted by man in brown suit, medium build, dark eyes and hair. Saw him on tracks south of tower about nine, walking this way. Stole up and into tower and struck me with——'"

Judge Barclay ceased reading and gazed at the gravely attentive face of the detective.

"That is all?" said Nick inquiringly.

"Yes, all," bowed the magistrate. "A jumble of dots and dashes told Sampson that the dying man was too weak to send more."

"What followed? What did Sampson do?"

"Luckily," Judge Barclay continued, "there was a freight engine on the siding at the station; and Sampson at once sent two policemen and a surgeon to the tower. They arrived there in less than ten minutes after he received the death message."

"And found?"

"The three men hurried up the long flight of steps leading to the tower door. The lamp was turned down so low that nothing could be seen through the broad windows. The door was not locked. The policeman leading the way stumbled and nearly fell over the body of Karl Glidden. He was lying on the floor with his head and shoulders partly under the telegraph table. His skull had been fractured with a monkey wrench. It was lying near by, and had been stolen from a tool box in the freight yard. Glidden had died, or so the surgeon judged, about two minutes after sending the message. His watch, money, and a gold ring had been stolen. There was no trace of his assailant, no evidence pointing to his identity. That covers the ground, Nick, in so far as the known circumstances are concerned."

Judge Barclay returned to the envelope a sheet of paper from which he had been reading.

Nick Carter gazed thoughtfully at the floor for a moment, then said abruptly:

"Allow me to read that death message, Judge Barclay, if you please."

The judge hastened to comply.

Nick read it more than once apparently, and he then made a copy of it in his notebook. He made no comments, however, but returned the yellow sheet—the same on which Joe Sampson, train dispatcher, had written the death message at the time of the murder.

CHAPTER III.

POINTERS TO CRIME.

Nick Carter resumed his conference with Judge Barclay by asking a very pertinent question.

"Tell me, judge," said he. "Aside from the fact that unknown bandit gangs have committed numerous crimes on the S. & O. Railway, is there any evidence, any circumstances, or special reason, for believing that Karl Glidden was killed by one of these outlaws?"

Judge Barclay smiled significantly.

"You work along straight lines, Nick," he remarked. "That question is right to the point. No, there is no such evidence. I feel morally sure, nevertheless, that you will land one of the bandits, very likely the chief outlaw among them, if you succeed in running down the murderer of Karl Glidden."

"I see," Nick remarked tentatively.

"On the other hand," Judge Barclay quickly added, "I admit that the police have had other theories, none of which impressed me seriously, though a young man was arrested on suspicion. I released him on bail, however, for I have known him since boyhood, and I did not think the evidence warranted my holding him without bail."

"What are the police theories?" Nick inquired. "Who is the young man?"

"The police theories first, Nick," said the magistrate. "They have not felt sure that this particular crime was committed by one of the bandit gangs. The fact that only one man is known to have figured in it is exceptional. From three to half a dozen have figured in all of the other crimes on the S. & O. line."

"I note the point," Nick nodded.

"The police have formed several theories," Judge Barclay continued. "They at first suspected that a tramp had killed Glidden for his money, later that some secret enemy did so for an unknown reason. They went so far, even, as to suspect that his assailant was a girl in male attire, and that the motive was jealousy, also that he was killed by a rival for some girl's affection."

"One moment," said Nick. "Was Glidden specially popular with the girls?"

"Yes, in a perfectly manly way," said Judge Barclay. "He was a fine-looking fellow, and very genial. It does not appear, however, that he was friendly with any particular girl, nor that any rivalry existed between him and another man."

"What about the young man who was arrested and now is under bonds?"

"His name is Roy Croft. I have known him from boyhood, as I have said, and he has always been a clean and honorable chap. He is not wealthy, nor are his parents, and he has been an engineer on our road for some four years, despite the fact that he still is under thirty. He is as clean-cut, handsome a man as stands in leather."

"Why is he suspected?" Nick inquired.

"Because he was seen on the tracks near the signal tower about half past nine on the night of the murder. He was clad in a brown suit, moreover, and in other respects answers the description of Glidden's assailant as given in the latter's death message."

"What has Croft said for himself?"

"He has told a straight story, Nick, barring his reticence at the outset."

"What was the occasion for that?"

Judge Barclay laughed.

"Well, the arrest of Croft on suspicion, Nick, brought to light an unsuspected love affair," he replied. "Croft admitted that he was on the railway at the time and place alleged, but insisted that he was going home, having taken that way as a short cut, and that he did not enter the signal tower. He refused to say where he had been, however, which was quite like him. I would have expected no less."

"What do you mean?"

"It appears that he is in love with Olga Burdick, the only daughter of the president of our road, Charles Burdick, who had heard of the girl's affection for the handsome young engineer and seriously opposed it, in which I think he made a great mistake. Roy Croft is worthy of any girl in the State."

"There had been a clandestine meeting, I infer?"

"Exactly."

"What followed?"

"Croft would not expose the girl, not even to clear himself from suspicion, which was true blue on his part."

"I agree with you."

"Olga Burdick, however, is above doing anything very wrong," Judge Barclay went on. "She is the brightest and prettiest girl in Shelby. She has a spirit of her own, moreover, and is not inclined to yield to her father's arbitrary decree."

"I see."

"She evidently is deeply in love with Roy Croft, as he with her. Be that as it may, Nick, she hastened to the courtroom the moment she heard of Roy's arrest, and, as loyal as he, she told the whole story."

"Good for her!" Nick remarked.

"That explained Croft's reticence, of course," Judge Barclay continued. "The other circumstances, however, with the fact that he would have had time to commit the crime and arrive home at the hour stated, which is corroborated by his parents, led our police chief to demand that he should be held pending further investigations. I decided to release him on bail, nevertheless."

"You evidently have faith in the young man."

"I have, indeed."

"Have you now covered all of the ground?"

"I think so."

"Let me ask you a few questions."

"Do so."

"Who is the surgeon who went to the signal tower?"

"Doctor Boyden. He lives nearly opposite the Shelby railway station."

"And the two policemen?"

"Officers Jones and Doyle."

"They discovered nothing of special significance, eh?"

"No, nothing."

"Did either of them examine the telegraph switch key before leaving the tower?"

"Yes. That point was brought up in court."

"During Croft's hearing?"

"Yes."

"What was the testimony?"

"Officer Doyle was the one who examined the telegraph instrument," said Judge Barclay. "He found the switch thrown off. It was argued, however, that the dying man might, even while trying to send a message, have thrown off the switch by chance when his strength failed him and he slipped to the floor. He was found lying nearly under the table, you remember."

"Yes, I remember," Nick nodded. "I don't know that I care to add to my inquiries. Just a word, now, Judge Barclay, about what I have done and why I have done it."

"I am all attention."

"After talking with you in Philadelphia and learning of the difficulty in obtaining any clew to the identity of these railway outlaws, I decided that it might be accomplished by placing two of my assistants here in assumed characters, as well as under cimcumstances that might enable them to get in touch with some of the crooks, with a view to impressing them so favorably that one or both of them might be invited to identify himself with the rascals. By thus becoming a spy in their midst, he sooner or later could identify the entire gang."

"Very good," said Judge Barclay, smiling. "A shrewd move, Nick, indeed, but an exceedingly dangerous one for your assistant. He would carry his life in his hand."

"That will be no new experience."

"These rascals would kill him on the instant, Nick, if his identity were discovered, or even suspected."

"No doubt, Barclay, unless he prevented it by doing the killing himself," Nick said dryly. "Be that as it may, judge, one of my assistants has been employed as a barroom waiter in the Reddy House for a full week. Some of the worst characters in these parts are known to frequent that hotel."

"That is true," said Judge Barclay. "By Jove, Nick, you surprise me with these preliminary steps—both surprise and encourage me."

"I think we shall accomplish something," smiled the detective. "My chief assistant was, as I have stated, arrested this afternoon as a tramp, against whom the laws in this State are very strict. When arraigned in court to-morrow morning, you must give him thirty days in the Shelby jail, as I have directed."

"I will do so, Nick. But aren't you making a mistake? What can he accomplish in jail?"

"You leave that to me, judge, and be very sure that you say nothing about this to any one," Nick replied impressively.

"Trust me to be silent."

"What is the jailer's name?"

"Horace Gardner."

"Trustworthy?"

"Till the last gun is fired."

"Very good. I don't happen to be acquainted with him. Write me a line of introduction, judge, to convince him of my identity."

Judge Barclay hastened to do so, and Nick inclosed the introductory letter in his notebook. Then, resuming his disguise, he said complacently:

"I think that is all for to-night. You will hear from me again, judge, when there is any occasion, but you must not attempt to see or communicate with me, nor further reveal my presence in Shelby."

"I understand, Nick, perfectly."

"Very good," said Nick, rising to go. "By the way, while I think of it, I may have ocasion to send some secret telegraph messages either from Shelby, or some neighboring town. Do you know of any operator who happens to be out of a job at this time?"

Judge Barclay racked his brain for a few seconds.

"Why, yes, there is one man," he replied. "I don't think he now is at work."

"What is his name?"

"James Reardon."

"A Shelby man?"

"He resided in Shelby when employed here, and I think he still retains his quarters in town. His home is at Benton Corners, however, though his house is now occupied by a married sister. Her husband's name is Hanlon. I don't know where Reardon lodges in town."

"I can easily find out, judge, if I happen to require his

services," said Nick, extending his hand. "That is all for to-night."

Nick departed a few moments later with his portfolio under his arm. Furtive glances in every direction convinced him that he had not been under espionage, and that no spy was in the spacious grounds surrounding the magistrate's residence.

Nick returned to the Reddy House and went up to his room.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DEATH MESSAGE.

Midnight.

Nick Carter and Patsy Garvan were seated in the detective's room in the low-grade hotel, where Patsy had stealthily joined him after his duties in the barroom were ended for the night.

The dive was not closed, however. Through the windows of the detective's room could be heard the noise in the smoke-filled place, while from the adjoining street came the gruff voices of partly intoxicated men lingering on the curbings and corners.

Nick had been listening for several minutes to the few intelligible words that occasionally reached his ears, but he could hear nothing of special significance, and he then closed the window and turned to Patsy, whom he already had informed of his interview with Judge Barclay, covering most of the essential points.

"It looks very much, Patsy, as if we have a big job on our hands," he remarked, as he turned from the window. "I don't refer only to the rounding up of Karl Glidden's murderer, though that is the first trick we must turn. I hope in doing so to get on the track of others, of some of the outlaws engaged in these railway crimes. Barclay was right in asserting that some of the population in this section are a bad lot."

"Bad is right, chief, and then some," said Patsy, with an expressive look on his darkly stained face. "An East Side gang has nothing on them. I've had a week in which to study them, and the fellows who ride in from the mountains and foothills—well, they're the limit, chief, all right. They are long on booze and bullets at all stages."

"Reddy's dive is a regular stamping ground for them, isn't it?" Nick inquired.

"You bet! They flock round here in bunches from early evening until midnight.

"You have overheard, nevertheless, nothing that gives you a definite clew to any of the outlaws?"

"Not a word, chief, though I've heard many a gang and group discussing the crimes," said Patsy. "It was only in a general way, however, that put me wise to nothing definite."

"Have you made any inquiries?"

"Sure thing, chief, but they cut no ice," declared Patsy. "If I was next to any of the bandits, they made mighty sure of not letting me get wise to it. I have wormed myself into a friendly acquaintance with a good many toughs, most of them regular booze fighters in the dive, and I reckon I stand well with them. That may help later in the game."

"Quite likely," Nick agreed. "To begin with, however, I'm going to get after Glidden's murderer, leaving everything else until I have landed him."

"You don't really suspect Roy Croft, do you?" questioned Patsy.

"I don't suspect him at all," said Nick, taking out his notebook to glance at one of the pages. "I suspect only one man, Patsy, and I'm going to get him."

"Only one, chief?"

"That's all. I mean the man who sent this death message from the K C signal tower."

"You don't think Glidden sent it?"

"I know he did not," said Nick confidently. "That appears in the length and character of the message."

"How so?"

"It is too long for a dying man to have sent, or, at least, one who expired within two minutes after sending it, as the surgeon stated," Nick explained. "He would not, nor could he, have given such a description of his assailant, going even so far as to state that he had seen him on the tracks and walking south about nine o'clock in the evening."

"Gee! There is something in that, chief," said Patsy. "A dying man would not have gone into such details."

"No, nor could he have done so," Nick replied. "This is confirmed, moreover, by the fact that the switch key was thrown off. There is only one chance in a hundred that a dying man, anxious to continue his message, would have accidentally thrown the key when he slipped insensible to the floor."

"That's right, too," Patsy agreed.

"What, then, are the only tenable deductions?"

"You say, chief."

"First, that Glidden was killed by an acquaintance, or supposed friend, whom he had reason to suspect of treachery. Otherwise, how could his assailant have entered the tower and done such a deed? It is safe to say that no man could have stolen up there and entered without being heard by Glidden, whose duties were important, and who was alert and reliable at all times."

"Right again, chief, surely," said Patsy.

"Second," Nick continued, "it is only reasonable to assume that Glidden was killed outright, or rendered insensible, at least, for his skull was fractured with a monkey wrench. He evidently was seated at the telegraph table when struck down, and he fell from his chair to the floor. Obviously, then, his assailant must have sent this death message, and is a telegraph operator, which provides us with one clew, at least."

"Gee whiz! That ought to help some, chief."

"It will help," said Nick. "That explains, too, why the switch key was thrown off after the message was sent. The rascal threw it from force of habit, not stopping to reason that it would be inconsistent with the fatal circumstances."

"That's as plain as twice two," said Patsy.

"It is equally plain, therefore, that the crook aimed with this message not only to avert suspicion from himself, but also to turn it upon another. And the fact that he described the figure and garments of Roy Croft, who was seen on the tracks about that time, denotes that he was trying to involve Croft in the crime."

"But he should have known, chief, that Glidden would have named Croft as his murderer, not merely described him," argued Patsy. "The two men were acquainted."

"You overlook one fact."

"What is that?"

"That Croft, if guilty, would most likely have been in

disguise," Nick pointed out. "The crook left that to be inferred by the police, and merely described Croft's garments and figure."

"Gee! That must explain it," said Patsy. "It's a hundred to one you are right."

"The question is, then, who has such bitter enmity for Roy Croft, and for what reason?" said Nick. "Also who is the telegraph operator that committed the crime? I questioned Judge Barclay about the local operators, merely asking whether he knew of one out of work, and he mentioned a man named James Reardon."

"Holy smoke!" Patsy exclaimed, interrupting. "There must be something in this, chief. James Reardon—I know him."

"You know him, eh?"

"That is to say, chief, I know who he is, and that he shows up in Reddy's barroom nearly every evening," Patsy explained.

"What type of man?"

"He is well built and about thirty years old, a rather handsome chap, with curly black hair and dark eyes. He dresses fairly well, and seems to have plenty of money. In these respects, chief, he lays over most of the bunch that frequent Reddy's place."

"Does he come here to drink?"

"He usually drinks only moderately, though I have seen him once with quite an edge on," said Patsy. "He nearly always comes in with a fellow named Hanlon, who is a good bit older, and a rough-looking man."

"Hanlon is his brother-in-law," said Nick. "He lives at Benton Corners. Has Reardon any other motive for coming here, as far as you can judge?"

"I think he has, chief," nodded Patsy. "I've seen him talking privately with other men, who came in singly, or in couples, and they appeared to have something on their minds. Most of them are pretty tough-looking mugs, too."

"Do you know their names?"

"I don't, chief, but I can find out."

"You had better do so," said Nick. "Note them on a slip of paper, and hand it to me to-morrow. I will drop into the barroom early in the evening. I shall be busy most of the day."

"I will have it ready for you, chief," Patsy assured him.

It was nearly one o'clock when they parted, but Nick was up and doing early the following morning. His first move was to visit the Shelby county jail, where he talked privately with the warden, Horace Gardner, and laid plans for what later occurred.

Ten o'clock found Nick in the municipal courtroom, in an entirely different disguise, where he saw Chick arraigned before Judge Barclay, and sentenced to thirty days in the Shelby jail.

Nick also saw that the episode on the street had been remembered. Curiosity had brought some of the observers to the courtroom. The tramp had evidently made an impression on them. They were expecting something amusing when he appeared in the prisoner's dock, and they were not disappointed. For Chick played his part to the letter, and badgered the judge with an audacity that immensely tickled a few low-browed hearers, some of whom Nick had seen in the street when Chick was arrested.

At eleven o'clock, again with his portfolio under his arm, Nick appeared at the Burdick residence and rang the bell. He suavely informed the butler that he would like an interview with Miss Burdick, that Judge Barclay had requested him to call on her, and the subterfuge had the desired effect.

Nick was admitted to a handsomely furnished reception room, where Olga Burdick presently joined him—a tall, graceful girl in the twenties, a pronounced blonde, with a remarkably pretty face and expressive blue eyes, turned inquiringly upon the detective when she entered.

Nick glanced at the door, smiling, and saying quietly:

"Close it, Miss Burdick, please. Judge Barclay sent me here to talk with you privately."

The girl seemed to anticipate his mission, for her eyes lighted and she hastened to comply. Then, turning quickly, she said inquiringly, in eager whispers:

"It is about Roy? Judge Barclay has heard something favorable?"

Nick placed a chair for her before replying, taking one near by and saying significantly:

"Judge Barclay has brought me here to learn something favorable."

"You mean?"

"I am going to confide in you, Miss Burdick, and I want you to be equally confidential. I am not a book agent, as I appear, but a New York detective employed by Judge Barclay to investigate the railway crimes. The crime to which I am giving my particular attention now is the one in which young Mr. Croft is involved. My name is Nick Carter."

"Oh, I have heard of you," said Olga, with suppressed enthusiasm. "I am more than delighted to know this. I feel sure that you, Mr. Carter, will ferret out the truth."

"I think so, too," Nick agreed, smiling. "But you must not say anything about my visit, or that I am at work on the case. I don't want it generally known that I am in Shelby."

"Trust me, Mr. Carter. I will not mention it."

"Very good."

"I know that Roy is innocent. I would trust him with my life. If there is anything I can do——"

"There is only one," Nick interposed. "I am trying to find a motive for the murder of Glidden, and I wish to know whether you were acquainted with him."

"I was not," said Olga quickly. "I knew him by sight, but we were never introduced."

"Was there any unfriendliness between Glidden and Roy Croft?"

"Not the slightest. They were very good friends."

"Do you know of any person who might wish to involve Croft in such a crime?"

"I do not, Mr. Carter. I can hardly imagine such baseness. Roy is one of the most manly and lovable persons I ever met," Olga earnestly declared, with eyes and cheeks beginning to glow. "I know that Judge Barclay must have told you about our relations, and of my father's opposition to our affection. But wealth is not all, Mr. Carter, in this world; or I, at least, do not think so."

"You are quite right, Miss Burdick," said Nick approvingly. "Wealth counts for very little if one has only wealth. While I think of it, do you happen to be acquainted with a man named Reardon?"

"James Reardon?"

"Yes."

Miss Burdick flushed deeply, and her prettily arched

brows fell to a frown over her bright eyes. She nodded quickly and said:

"Yes, indeed, I know him, or did when he was train dispatcher at the Shelby station, but I no longer recognize him, Mr. Carter."

"Why is that?" Nick inquired. "Tell me frankly."

"There is nothing to tell, sir, except that he fell in love with me, or said he did, and was very insistent and ungentlemanly when I opposed him. He became insolent, even, and I never have recognized him since."

"Quite right," said Nick. "He was train dispatcher here at one time, was he?"

"Yes, sir, about a year ago," said Olga. "But he is a drinking man, Mr. Carter, and was not trustworthy. He was discharged, and a Mr. Sampson is filling the position. I know about these matters, you see, because my father is president of the S. & O. road."

"Yes, I am aware of that."

Nick questioned her a little further and cautioned her again to secrecy, then arose and departed. He suspected that he had discovered the motive for the murder, that Reardon was the guilty man, and thus had aimed to satisfy a feeling of vengeful resentment. Nick also realized that suspicion alone was not enough, however; that Reardon very carefully had covered his tracks, and that it might be difficult to fix the crime upon him, if not impossible.

It was nearly nine o'clock that evening when Nick, as agreed upon with Patsy, sauntered into the barroom of the Reddy House, which was thronged with its customary gang of patrons. Nick was roughly clad, and in another disguise on this ocasion, and it was several minutes before Patsy discovered him seated at one of the bare deal tables.

"Gee, I hardly knew you, chief!" he said quietly, while taking his order. "You look like a rounder from Roundsville."

"Things are shaping up," Nick replied. "Has Reardon been here this evening?"

"He's here now," muttered Patsy. "The tall guy with three men at the table nearest the door. That grizzly-haired man on the right is Jake Hanlon. The other two often come here with them. The nearer one is named Bryan. The other is called Link Magee. They come from Benton Corners, where Hanlon lives and does some farming and herding."

Nick cast merely a furtive glance at the group of men seated near the street door. They were a rough, hangdog-looking lot, with the exception of Reardon, who was better clad, and whose dark, clean-cut face was more striking and refined. They were talking earnestly with voices subdued, over a bottle and glasses on the table.

"I'll slip you the names of others when I bring your order," Patsy added.

He returned in a few moments, when Nick stealthily took a slip of paper from his assistant. He then said quietly:

"Listen: I want you to quit this job."

"I get you. That listens good to me, all right."

"Throw up the job a little later in the evening, and get after Reardon when he leaves the place. I have learned that he has lodgings in town, but frequently visits Hanlon at Benton Corners."

"I'm sure of that, too," said Patsy. "They often come here together."

"I want you to keep an eye on Reardon's doings when in town," Nick directed. "You may report to me at the Shelby House, to which I shall shift for better accommodations. Shadow him when he leaves here to-night, and——"

Nick broke off abruptly and glanced toward the door. A tall, rawboned, roughly clad man had rushed in from the street. The gaunt, stubbly whiskered face under his rusty slouch hat was a picture of evil amusement. He was laughing loudly, a laugh mingled with gleeful shouts to the half score of ruffians then in the place, one and all of whom turned immediately in his direction.

"Oh, I say, boys, what d'ye think?" he yelled for a starter. "That hobo has broke jail."

"Broke jail!" echoed one of the hearers. "Broke jail, Mauler?"

"You bet!" Mauler shouted, waving both arms in the air. "He was near breaking Hod Gardner's head, too, and did break one of his arms. I just got the news from a cop who——"

"Hold your horses, there, Mauler!" cried Reardon, who had swung sharply around on his chair. "When did all this happen?"

"Half an hour ago, Jim," Mauler replied, less vociferously. "A sawbones has just set Hod's arm and ordered him to bed. He reckons fever may——"

"But how did it happen?" Reardon again cut in. "How could the hobo turn such a trick?"

"Great guns, Jim, I'm thinking he could turn any kind of a trick, that hobo," Mauler roared again. "He's the limit, Jim, and then some. Why, he gave the judge the laugh when he sent him up for a month, and said as how he wouldn't intrude that long on Hod, not him, Jim! He——"

"But how did it happen?" Reardon impatiently reiterated.

"Hod went to shift him to a stronger cell—thunderation! Wouldn't that jar you? No stronger cell for the hobo! He jolted Hod on the jaw and smashed him up against the corridor wall, then grabbed his keys and bolted for the door."

"The devil you say!"

"Devil is right, all right, when that hobo cuts loose. He downed a deputy on his way out, and—— Well, the last seen of him he was taking leg bail in the direction of Benton Corners. A posse of police are after him with a buzz car. But they'll not get him, Jim, not that game geezer. You can bet your rawhides on that."

Nick had been furtively watching Reardon's dark face. It had lost some of its color. An ugly frown had settled on his brow. He turned abruptly and muttered something to two of his companions, Bryan and Link Magee.

Both men at once arose and hurried out of the dive.

Nick glanced quickly at Patsy, saying, with voice lowered:

"Watch Reardon. Stick to him, Patsy, till we meet again. Chuck this job and shift your disguise. You'll find me in the Shelby House to-morrow."

Patsy nodded understandingly.

Nick arose and disappeared into the hotel office.

CHAPTER V.

LIFE IN HAND.

Chick Carter sat down on a stump near one side of the lonely road and awaited developments.

It was a clear, warm night, with a myriad of stars in the sky, and after a run at nearly top speed for more than a mile, until the lights of Shelby were left far behind him, a rest on a stump was decidedly welcome.

All that now met Chick's gaze in any direction were the strip of rough road, the woods on either side, and stars in the purple dome of the heavens.

As may be inferred, nevertheless, Chick's escape from the county jail was not as desperate and sanguinary as Mauler had depicted and really believed.

It was the result of Nick's conference with Warden Gardner, and though the latter's head was then in bandages, and his arms in splints, both were not because he had suffered any injuries, but because Nick Carter never did things by halves, and was heading off a possibility that the subterfuge might be discovered.

Chick gazed down the road and listened, anticipating what would follow, for he was thoroughly informed of Nick's suspicions and designs; but he could hear no sound of any pursuers, nor see signs of any in the direction of the town.

"I would have given them a good run for the money, by Jove, if all this had been on the level," he said to himself, with some satisfaction. "I must have covered that mile pretty close to record time. There's nothing like keeping up appearances, however, when pulling off a trick of this kind. If the police get after me promptly, they ought to show up before—— Ah, I thought so! Here they are now, hammer and tongs."

The glare from the headlights of an approaching touring car suddenly appeared around a distant curve of the woodland road. They were like the glowing eyes of some uncouth monster dimly discernible in the surrounding gloom.

Chick drew back from the road and waited, crouching behind some shrubbery. The car came nearer, laden with policemen, passing with a rumble and roar over the rough road, and within a minute it had sped out of view over the brow of a hill on which Chick had halted to rest and recover his breath.

He now hurried on, however, nearly to the top of the hill, where he paused and looked—back.

Both Nick and he had sized up correctly the sentiments of some of the men who had seen the supposed tramp arrested the previous afternoon.

In the near distance, quite plainly visible in the starlight shed upon the gray road, two horsemen were rapidly approaching.

Chick pretended that he did not see them, and he darted across the road on the brow of the hill, where he knew they would surely catch sight of him. He then crouched again amid some shrubbery and pretended to be interested only in the course taken by the policemen.

Glancing back, nevertheless, Chick saw that his ruse was about to prove successful. The two riders had dismounted and were concealing their horses in the bushes near the road. When, three minutes later, they crept stealthily up the hill to hunt for him, they discovered Chick crouching back of a rock and apparently watching for the return of the police car.

They were the two men sent by Reardon from Reddy's dive—Bryan and Link Magee.

A twig snapped under Bryan's feet.

Chick leaped up, turning sharply around, and appeared about to take to his heels.

"Hold on!" cried Magee, whipping out a revolver. "Don't bolt, or you might get a bullet in your back. Not that you would, mind you, for we're not after you, save in friendly fashion."

Chick glared at them through the starlight and appeared to stand in awe of the leveled weapon. He cried hurriedly:

"Don't shoot! I'll cave and go back with you."

"Back where?" asked Magee, with a grin.

"To the caboose. Ain't that what you want? Ain't you after me?"

"We're after you, all right!"

"I'll knuckle. Don't shoot."

"You don't have to knuckle," laughed Magee. "All you need do is keep your head and not take to your heels. You have legged it fur enough. You can ride the rest of the way."

"Back to the caboose?"

"Caboose be hanged! Keep an eye open for that buzz car, Dick, while I set the blokie right. He seems to think we're out to nail him."

"Put him wise, Link," returned Bryan, stepping out to gaze over the road. "Give it to him straight."

"D'ye hear that?" questioned Magee, approaching Chick in more friendly fashion. "We ain't here to arrest you. We want to do you a turn and prevent the bluebottles from getting you. Can't you tumble? You would, mebbe, if a house fell on you."

Chick now appeared to grasp the situation and appreciate their intentions. His hangdog countenance, for he was outrageously made up, lighted with an expression of keen relief and rising gratitude.

"Say, what's this hand-out you're passing me?" he asked, pretending to be surprised. "Does it go?"

"Bet you it goes," Magee nodded.

"You two ginks seem to be on the level."

"We're on the level with you, all right."

"And it ain't the caboose for mine?"

"Nix on the caboose, old man," said Magee, returning his revolver to his pocket. "We're no dog catchers. We're out to do you a turn."

"That's what we are," supplemented Bryan, turning back from the road. "It would be the jug for you again, all right, if we didn't butt in and lend you a hand."

"What d'ye mean?" Chick questioned, as if perplexed. "What's that 'lend me a hand' gag? D'ye mean it?"

"Sure we mean it," nodded Magee, grinning. "Ain't we here, a couple o' Charlies right on the spot? How fur d'ye think you'd get giving leg bail if no one shoved out a duke to aid you? The guns would land you before you could get out of the county. Take it from me, mate, there's nothing in legging it. We'll show you something better."

"A place where I can lie low till the smoke settles?" questioned Chick eagerly.

"That's what, mate, and where you can make pards of some of your own sort. We ain't long on helping out a gun, but we fit in nicely with a covey of your cloth. We'll look after you. What d'ye say? Will you take a chance?"

Chick thrust out his hand.

"I'd take anything that wasn't nailed down," he replied, shaking hands with both ruffians. But this here surprise party all but gives me a knock-out. You two guys are all to the mustard, for fair, if you mean what you say."

"You'll find we mean it."

"But where will you get off? How am I to make good? You blokes ain't doing this for love. I ain't so stuck on myself as to think that. What's the game? What's the big noise?"

"We'll explain when——"

"Cut out the spiel, Link, and duck for cover," cried Bryan, striding in among the shrubbery. "The bluebirds are flying this way. I caught the glim of their lamps at the crossroad. Duck back of the thicket."

"This way, mate," muttered Magee, grabbing Chick's arm. "Wait till they have passed. Then we'll have soft walking."

Chick yielded readily, and they hid in a thicket some twenty yards from the road. They scarce had found this concealment when, from around a turn at the base of the hill, the lights of the motor car came into view, shedding a glare over the gray road and throwing into momentary relief every tree, bush, and shrub on which it fell.

The thicket, however, proved to be an effective concealment. The car chugged over the hill at nearly top speed, and half a minute later its red rear light was fading away in the distance.

"They're heading for town, blast 'em," growled Magee, leading the way toward the road. "The chief isn't with them. Most likely he's keeping the phone wires hot in every direction. You wouldn't have a look in, mate, but for us."

"I'll make good, all right, whenever you show me the way," Chick assured him.

"We'll do that, never fear," Dick Bryan put in. "Are you good for a three-mile walk?"

"Three miles—huh!" Chick grunted. "I could walk that far on my hands."

Both ruffians laughed, and Magee said abruptly:

"Bring up the nags, Dick, and we'll hoof it along with him. Jake may overtake us on the way. It's not likely that Jim will come out with him to-night."

"He'll not show up before to-morrow," growled Bryan, returning to get their horses.

"What's your name, mate?" Magee asked while they waited.

"Bill Nelson," said Chick readily. "That's one of them."

"Got others, eh?" queried Magee, grinning.

"Had others," Chick tersely admitted. "What's yours?"

"Lincoln Magee—Link, for short."

"And t'other guy?"

"Dick Bryan. We hang out with a covey named Hanlon. You'll meet him to-night."

"Where?"

"At his place."

"That where we're heading?"

"Sure. We'll put you where no bluebottle will get you. You'll find us a bunch of warm rags."

"Say!" Chick abruptly exclaimed, facing him squarely. "Why have you fellows given me a lift in this way? 'Tain't often men do as much for a stranger, or gink they don't know from a horsehide. I'll make good in return, mind you, if I pipe a way of doing it. But what beats me, Magee, is why you fellows have done it. That beats me to a frazzle."

Magee indulged in a grim laugh and took a chew of tobacco. He then proceeded to state that he and Bryan had seen Chick arrested and afterward in court, that they had heard him badger the officers and the judge, that he had tickled them immensely and been sized up by them as a game fellow of the right sort, and that they at once had started out to aid him upon learning of his escape and the pursuit of the police.

Magee really thought he was telling the whole story, all there was back of Jim Reardon's command to do what they had done and were doing; but there was a deeper and darker motive in the mind of Reardon, as the sequel will show.

Naturally, nevertheless, Chick now was convinced that he had succeeded in putting himself in right with the rascals, that they had not even a shadow of suspicion, and he felt sure that he could ultimately worm out of them their every secret in connection with the recent railway crimes.

Dick Bryan returned, leading the two horses, while Magee was explaining, and the three men then started on their walk to Jake Hanlon's place at Benton Corners.

All the while an animated conversation was maintained along lines consistent with the situation, Chick wisely deferring any display of an inquisitive nature, but amusing his companions with a flow of slang, humorous stories, and apt sallies to an extent that, when the distant lights of the scattered settlement came into view, both Magee and Bryan measured him as a man after their own hearts—as, indeed, he was, figuratively speaking.

Jake Hanlon's place proved to be a big, faded, old-fashioned farmhouse, with a large stable and numerous outbuildings in the rear, all occupying a partly wooded estate of forty acres, most of which was inferior land, that was worth hardly as many dollars as it contained acres. The place was something like half a mile from the half-dozen small scattered dwellings that were graced with the name of Benton Corners.

Chick Carter viewed it with interest when Link Magee announced with a growl of satisfaction that—"thet there was the place."

A lamp was burning in one of the lower rooms. The glow from it was dimly discernible on one of the curtained windows. The remainder of the large square house was shrouded in darkness. It loomed up grim and gloomy amid its inferior and almost desolate surroundings, when seen only in the feeble light from a starry sky.

Chick followed the two men to the open stable, and waited while they put up their horses for the night.

A gaunt, angular, hard-featured woman heard them and appeared at the back door of the house with an oil lamp, shading her eyes to peer out toward the stable, and shouting in harsh and strident tones:

"Thet you, boys? Be Jake with you?"

"No, he ain't!" yelled Magee shortly.

"Drat him! Does he want me to set up all night?"

"That's the old woman, Jake's wife," said Bryan, with a grin. "She's as sweet as cider vinegar."

"Any one else hang out here?" Chick inquired, with an eye to the future.

"Nope. Only us three cocks and the old hen. But there are others of the right sort yonder. Come in."

Chick glanced again toward the settlement at which the

ruffian pointed, then followed both to the house and entered.

The magistrate of Shelby was right, in that the detective —carried his life in his hand.

CHAPTER VI.

CLOSING IN.

Patsy Garvan did not lose sight of Jim Reardon after receiving the instructions Nick had given him. For more than an hour after the departure of his two companions, Reardon sat talking with Jake Hanlon in Reddy's barroom, drinking more frequently than usual, and all the while with a steadily deepening scowl on his dark face.

Patsy passed near them as often as possible, hoping to catch a word or two from one of them, but their voices were so subdued that he failed completely amid the noise in the smoke-filled dive.

"Gee! he certainly is mulling deep over something," thought Patsy, noting that Reardon at intervals appeared to be in grim and gloomy abstraction. "That's come over him since he heard of the tramp's escape. Has that made him suspicious of something wrong? It looks so, for fair. But it's money to marbles that he'll never guess the truth. He's getting a bun on, too, and that's a bit significant.

Fortunately for Patsy, in that it obviated the necessity of abruptly throwing up his job and incurring a possibility of later suspicion, Reardon and Hanlon did not leave the dive until after Patsy's period of duty ended for the night.

He then slipped out through the hotel office, gaining the street unobserved, where he deftly made a quick change in his appearance, and was waiting for the two men when they emerged.

Patsy shadowed them to a stable back of the hotel, where Hanlon's saddled horse was tied under a shed. The ruffian led him out and paused briefly in the stable yard before mounting, and Patsy could then hear the few remarks that passed between the two men.

"When will I see you again, Jim?" Hanlon asked, with a hand on the bridle.

"Most likely to-morrow," said Reardon moodily.

"Ain't you sure?"

"There ain't nothing sure in this world."

"Say, hang it!" Hanlon blurted with a growl. "What you got on your mind? You've been as dumpy as a dough head ever since Dick and Link Magee left us."

"Don't you bother with what's on my mind, Jake," replied Reardon, throwing off his abstraction. "You'll know soon enough, if it cuts any ice bigger than a hailstone. Yes, I'll see you to-morrow."

"At my place?"

"Most likely."

"What time?"

"After I've nosed round a bit," said Reardon pointedly. "I've got a bee in my bonnet, Jake, and I'm going to clinch it, or drive the critter out. That's all for to-night. Get a move on. I'm tired."

"So long, then. I'll be off for Benton Corners."

The two men shook hands, and Hanlon then mounted and rode from the stable yard, and a moment later went clattering down the street.

Patsy crouched in a dark corner formed by the fence, still watching the lingering suspect.

Reardon drew a revolver from his pocket and examined it carefully, evidently making sure that every chamber contained a cartridge. There was something grim and ominous in the act, simple though it was, and it was reflected in the man's moody face when he replaced the weapon and strode out of the stable yard.

Patsy trailed him to a lodging house in a somewhat better section of the town, watching him until he entered, and then seeking a doorway on the opposite side of the street.

A light presently appeared at one of the lodging-house windows, and Patsy saw Reardon draw down the curtain. Five minutes later the light vanished, and, after waiting five more, Patsy came to a correct conclusion.

"He's abed for the night," he said to himself. "It's a safe gamble that he will not stir before morning. Reddy's booze is like knock-out drops. I'll hike back and put the chief wise, then snatch a wink of sleep to brace me for to-morrow. This sure looks to me like something doing."

Patsy hastened back to the Reddy House, only to find that Nick already had given up his room and departed. Patsy then hastened to the Shelby House, the leading hotel in the town, where he arrived shortly after midnight. He did not know under what name Nick had registered; but among the list inscribed on the book he found one in the detective's familiar hand, and thus Patsy easily learned what room had been assigned him.

A signal knock on the door half a minute later admitted Patsy to the room, where he found Nick partly disrobed for the night.

"Jim Reardon is the man we want, Patsy, all right," said Nick, after hearing his assistant's story. "I have felt sure of that since talking with Olga Burdick, but the difficulty lies in fixing the crime upon him. We really haven't an atom of tangible evidence against him."

"That's true, chief," Patsy agreed, a bit dubiously. "There's no denying it."

"Did Hanlon appear to have any misgivings because of the supposed tramp's escape?" inquired Nick.

"No, chief, he didn't."

"And he did not appear to understand Reardon's abstraction?"

"That's what," nodded Patsy. "It seemed to puzzle him. I heard him ask about it in the stable yard."

"H'm, I see," Nick said thoughtfully. "I am inclined to think, Patsy, that Reardon was the only rascal who figured in the Glidden murder, and that the others know nothing about it, nor even suspect him."

"By Jove, it does look so."

"Because of the numerous railway crimes, Reardon may have reasoned that he could kill Glidden and get away unsuspected, believing the crime would be attributed to the bandits that are guilty of the other crimes," Nick continued. "His game was to fix the murder on Roy Croft, if possible, and thus get back at Olga Burdick for having turned him down."

"That's about the size of it."

"He evidently knew of Croft's secret meetings with Olga, and that he habitually returned home over the railway tracks. He must have watched for him on the night of the murder, and immediately after Croft passed the signal tower, Reardon went up there and committed the crime. He could easily have done it, mind you, being acquainted with Glidden, who would have suspected nothing because of his visit. He surely is the man who downed him, Patsy, and then sent the death message."

"I'd bank my pile on that, chief, all right."

"How we can prove all this, nevertheless, is still an open

question," said Nick. "I have given Chick a hint, however, and he may accomplish something."

"That ought to be a safe gamble, too."

"Whether Reardon had a hand in the other railway crimes is also a question," Nick added. "I cannot tell till we begin to investigate them. That must come later. I'm going to wind up this Glidden case before doing anything else. I must devise some way of evoking a self-betrayal from Reardon, providing we cannot find adequate evidence to convict him."

"Can that be done, chief?" questioned Patsy doubtfully. "Reardon is a pretty keen and cautious fellow."

"I'll find a way, Patsy, sooner or later," Nick confidently predicted. "You stick to him and keep me posted."

"Trust me for that."

"Pick him up when he leaves the lodging house tomorrow morning and don't lose sight of him," Nick added. "Phone me here, or send me a note, if necessary."

"I've got you," nodded Patsy, rising to go. "You'll hear from me, chief, all right."

It was one o'clock when they parted, Patsy returning to the Reddy House for the night. Seven o'clock the following morning, however, found Patsy with an eye on the lodging house. The curtains of Reardon's room had not been raised, which was convincing evidence that he still was in bed.

Patsy waited until eight o'clock before he saw the first sign of life. The curtain then was lifted and Reardon appeared for a moment at the window. Ten minutes later he left the house, with Patsy tracking him.

He shadowed him to a restaurant, where the suspect spent half an hour at breakfast, after which he hastened down the street as if on some definite mission.

"Suddenly, however, observing the main office of the telegraph company, he stopped short with his brows knit in thought for several moments. He then entered the office and sent a message.

"Gee! I wonder what that signifies," thought Patsy, watching him from an opposite doorway. "I must find out, all right. But I must not lose sight of him, all the same."

Patsy did not see just then how both could be accomplished. He continued to follow Reardon, therefore, and the latter now turned his steps toward the Reddy House, where he seated himself in the office and began to read a morning paper.

"By Jove, this is my chance," thought Patsy. "I can use the telephone booth without being heard. I'll call up the chief and send him to the telegraph office."

With an eye constantly on Reardon, Patsy then tried to get in communication with Nick. He was informed by the Shelby House clerk, however, that the guest could not be found in the hotel, and Patsy rightly inferred that Nick had gone out on some mission. He had, as a matter of fact, gone to have a look at the K. C. signal tower, the scene of the murder.

Patsy then took the only other course that appeared feasible. He called up the telegraph office by telephone and asked to talk with the manager. Getting him on the wire, Patsy confided his identity and that he was in the service of Nick Carter, then in Shelby, and at the same time warned him not to reveal the facts.

Patsy then requested the manager to tell him what message had been sent by James Reardon, and the other readily complied. He reported after a few moments:

"No message has been sent signed by James Reardon. One has been sent to Nick Carter, however, which may be the one you want."

"That's what," replied Patsy. "Please repeat it to me."

The manager did so.

The message read:

"REDDY HOUSE.

"MR. NICK CARTER, New York City: When can you come to Shelby on a case? Wire. ALFRED JAMES.

Patsy Garvan needed no one to tell him what this signified.

"The rascal suspects that Nick already is here, and he has taken this way to find out. He thinks some one in Nick's office will wire him to that effect. He'll get fat on that scheme. The chief's office isn't conducted that way. The rascal now is waiting for the answer."

Patsy called up the telegraph office again, and he now told the manager to telephone him the answer to the message before sending it to the Reddy House, giving him a fictitious name to be used in ringing him up.

He then sat down and wrote the circumstances up to that time for Nick, leaving the page to be finished later, in case he had to depart hurriedly.

Jim Reardon, all the while, sat grimly reading a local newspaper.

Twenty minutes brought the answer to the telegram.

It was sent in advance to Patsy, as follows:

"MR. ALFRED JAMES, Shelby, Reddy House: Cannot say. Nick Carter absent. JOSEPH, Head Butler."

Patsy heard it and grinned. He knew that it would not betray Nick's presence in Shelby, though it surely would increase Reardon's suspicions.

Patsy sat down again and finished his letter to Nick, inclosing it and sending it by a boy to the Shelby House, addressed in the fictitious name under which the detective had registered.

Five minutes later a messenger boy brought in the telegram, which Reardon hastened to intercept and appropriate. He signed for it, then broke the seal and read the brief communication. His frown deepened. He thrust the message into his pocket, then strode into the barroom.

Patsy continued within sight and hearing.

"I say, Gilly," Reardon cried, addressing the morning bartender; "if any one calls here looking for me, tell him I've gone out to Jake Hanlon's place, will you?"

"Sure thing, Jim," assented the other. "Anything more?"

"No, that's all. Gimme a big drink of redeye."

"Chaser?"

"No chaser."

Reardon drained the glass of whisky, then hastened out to the stable in the rear of the hotel.

Patsy followed him as far as a section of the fence through a crack in which he could see into the yard and hear what Reardon said to the hostler. It amounted to very little, in so far as what was said.

"Saddle my mare, Joe," Reardon commanded. "Be quick about it."

The animal was led out within five minutes to the stable yard.

Reardon tossed the hostler a quarter, then sprang into the saddle. Half a minute later he was clattering rapidly out of the town.

Patsy made a few inquiries as to the precise location of the Hanlon place.

"Three miles, eh?" he said to himself. "I can cover that in no time—or record time, surely."

CHAPTER VII.

CHICK CARTER'S GAME.

Chick Carter did not sleep less soundly because of the hazardous undertaking in which he was engaged.

Playing his part in a way that deceived Jake Hanlon as completely as it had blinded the others, Chick had talked with him for nearly an hour the previous night, when he arrived home after parting from Reardon. He then had retired complacently to an attic room assigned him, well pleased with what he thus far had accomplished.

Morning brought no observable change in his disreputable hosts. All appeared as grimly cordial when he joined them at breakfast, even the gaunt, low-browed wife of Hanlon, though she seemed none too pleased with having another man to feed and care for.

"You had best stick under cover to-day, Nelson," Hanlon advised, when he arose from the table. "Stay in the house and lie low from the windows."

"I reckon that's good judgment, boss," Chick readily agreed.

"Bet you it's good judgment," Hanlon growled. "We don't stand any too well in these parts and 'tain't no dead sartinty that a bunch of bluebottles will not show up to look us over."

"Blast 'em," muttered Chick, scowling.

"In case they do, Nelson, you duck to the cellar and into a hole I'm going to show you," Hanlon added. "They'll never find it, nor any other nosing gazabo. Come down along with me, and I'll show you."

Chick accompanied the grizzled ruffian to the basement. In the foundation wall of the house was a cleverly constructed section that could be turned on a pivot, forming a door, yet which would defy ordinary inspection when closed. When open, it led into a small underground room below the porch of the house, the existence of which would never have been suspected.

Chick expressed his admiration in characteristic terms, also his appreciation of Hanlon's confidence, and he then returned with him to a long, old-fashioned room adjoining the kitchen, where he remained while the three men went out to their customary work on the place and in the stable.

Taking a chair somewhat back from one of the windows, through which he could furtively watch them, Chick pretended to be absorbed in an old picture book, though Hanlon's wife, then at work in the kitchen, was the only person likely to observe him.

Chick knew very well that no policemen would put in an appearance. Just before ten o'clock, however, the sudden clatter of hoofs fell on the driveway, and a solitary horseman presently dismounted in front of the stable.

Chick immediately recognized him from the description Nick had given him.

"Jim Reardon, by Jove, as sure as a hog has bristles," he said to himself. "There is no mistaking him."

He heard Hanlon's wife approaching the kitchen door. He started up and pretended to be alarmed, until her harsh voice fell on his ears.

"Don't fear," she snapped shortly. "He's one of the gang."

"One of the gang, eh?" thought Chick, while the woman drew back and closed the door. "One of the gang is right, I guess. There is a gang, then, and these rascals are a part of it. Only a small part of it, however, if the truth were known. But that may come later—must come later."

Chick had resumed his seat and was watching the group in front of the stable, which was some fifty yards back of the house. Hanlon, Magee and Bryan had hurried out to greet Reardon, who looked unusually grim and white, though he forced a smile to his face while talking with them. He had pulled a local newspaper from his pocket, one containing a story of the tramp's escape from jail, describing it in detail and the injuries sustained by Warden Gardner and the deputy.

As a matter of fact, too, the newspapers supposed it was telling the truth—so perfect were Nick Carter's plans, as well as their execution, whenever he was engaged in such an artifice.

Reardon read the story aloud to his three companions, but he did not then say what he had in mind. He listened a bit grimly to their laughter, their gleeful comments, their remarks concerning Chick; and then he led his horse into the stable, where he had more to say than he had said outside.

A quarter hour passed.

Chick then saw Magee and Bryan swagger around to the back of the stable, each with a hoe in his hand. They disappeared into a potato field back of the building.

Reardon and Hanlon in the meantime were approaching the back door of the house, talking, and laughing grimly.

Chick Carter's eyes took on a brief but ominous glow. He was thinking of a suggestion Nick had made, by which he might possibly evoke a self-betrayal from Reardon, and with a view to which this hazardous subterfuge had been planned. Chick thought he saw a favorable opportunity, in that he just then would have only two men to cope with, if matters came to a show-down and arrests were imperative. It was not in his nature to shrink from tackling two men, even a woman thrown in.

"By Jove, I'll make a bid, at least, and find out how he will take it," he said to himself. "If I could nail these three and get them well in hand, I could down the other two a little later. A bid goes, by Jove, let come what may."

Chick heard the heavy tread of the two men in the kitchen. They paused briefly to talk with Mag Hanlon, then both strode into the long room in which the detective was seated.

Hanlon was leading the way, and he at once began in his rough-and-ready fashion to introduce Reardon.

"Here's a friend of mine," he announced. "You heard us speak of him last night. Jim Reardon by name. Shake with him, Nelson, and you'll know him better later."

Chick had arisen from his chair, as grim and unkempt a tramp in appearance as when arrested in the Shelby square two days before.

He turned and looked at Reardon, starting slightly and drawing back for a moment, then he approached and extended his hand, though still staring in a way that Reardon could not but notice.

"Nelson, eh?" said he, sharply eying Chick. "Glad to know you, Mr. Nelson."

"Same to you, boss," Chick replied, now grinning agreeably. "I've been used so well by the ginks round here that any friend of theirs is a friend of mine."

"Good for you," nodded Reardon. "That rings true."

"It goes for all it's worth, boss, you can bet on that."

"I say," put in Hanlon, displaying the newspaper. "Here's a yarn about your jail break, Nelson, and it's worth reading. You sure gave those screws all that was coming to them."

"That so?"

"You cracked the warden's block and broke his arm," grinned Hanlon. "The deputy has a black eye."

"He got away lucky," Chick growled significantly. "I'm some chamois pusher, as far as that goes, when I cut loose to make a get-away. No thirty days for mine, not much, if I see an opening."

"It was good work, Nelson, all right," declared Reardon approvingly.

"Read it to him, Jim," said Hanlon, tossing the newspaper on a table. "I'm going out with the boys to weed that potato patch. This infernal place will go to the dogs, barring a bit of work during some part of the day. We'll be in at noon."

"Go ahead," said Reardon, picking up the paper. "Hoeing potatoes is not my long suit. I'll stay here, Jake, and have a talk with Nelson."

"Just as you like," said Hanlon, turning to go. "You're no good on a hoe, so you might as well."

He strode out with the last and closed the door, and Chick saw him a few moments later walking around the table, hoe in hand.

"That reduces things to an even break, now, barring the woman," he said to himself. "Could there be a better time than the present?"

Jim Reardon had taken a couple of cigars from his pocket, placing one on the table and lighting the other, saying in the meantime:

"Have a weed, Nelson. We may as well enjoy ourselves."

"Thanks," said Chick. "I don't mind if I do."

"Want to hear the yarn about the break?" asked Reardon, taking a chair.

"Sure thing, if you have a mind to read it."

"Certainly."

"I ain't long on the literary stuff myself."

"I'll read it to you."

"Spiel ahead," said Chick, resuming his seat.

Reardon read the story, pausing frequently to puff his cigar and slip in a comment upon what was said to have occurred in the county jail.

Chick listened with few interruptions, though he smiled grimly, at times, and nodded, as if to corroborate the story.

Reardon laid aside the newspaper, remarking deliberately:

"It was good work, Nelson, as I said before, and you must be quite a sandy chap. But say!" he abruptly added, gazing sharply into the detective's inscrutable eyes; "there's one question I want to ask you."

"What question is that, boss?"

"Why did you start and stare at me when I entered this room?" Reardon demanded.

It was the very question Chick Carter wanted him to ask, the very question he had artfully impelled him to ask.

CHAPTER VIII.

A BACK CURRENT.

Chick Carter did not answer the question he so artfully had invited. Instead, he appeared anxious to evade it.

"Start and stare at you, boss?" he replied, as if perplexed.

"That's what I said," Reardon nodded.

"I didn't do that."

"You didn't, eh?"

"I reckon not, Mr. Reardon. What would I stare at you for?"

"That's what I want to know," Reardon said a bit sternly. "You need not deny again that you did so, for that don't go down. I have eyes, you know, and the gray matter in my head is not oatmeal."

"I reckon not," Chick allowed.

"Why did you do it, then?"

"Do what?"

"Start and stare at me. Come, give it to me straight," Reardon forcibly insisted.

Chick appeared embarrassed and anxious to drop the matter. He drew forward in his chair and pleaded more earnestly:

"Say, let's cut it out, boss, if it's all the same to you. I didn't mean to stare at you. I'm not——"

"You're not answering my question," Reardon cut in impatiently. "Why don't you answer it? Give it to me straight. Did you stare at me because you thought you had seen me before?"

Chick shifted uneasily on his chair and appeared even more unwilling to discuss the matter.

"Come, out with it," Reardon insisted.

"See here, boss," Chick replied, dropping his voice perceptibly. "I'm no gink that butts into other people's business. A guy what opens his trap when he don't need to ain't no good. I wouldn't squeal on a pal, if the devil had me on a red-hot fork. That's me, boss! Cut it out! I dunno when or where I have seen you, if I ever did. My lamps ain't none too good. The wicks are getting charred. That's what, boss."

Reardon laughed, but the laugh had no tinge of mirth in it.

"You're all right, Nelson," said he. "I see that plainly, and I like you for it. But I want you to answer my question. I want the truth straight from the shoulder. You think you have seen me before. Tell me when and where."

"You're bound to have it, eh?" queried Chick, frowning.

"That's what. I want to know."

"All right, then, since you won't take no," said Chick, with manifest reluctance.

"When did you see me?"

"One day about—say, Reardon, I'll never know just when, no matter who asks me!"

"That part of it is all right, Nelson, and I believe you," Reardon said more sharply. "But I want it straight from you and I'm going to have it. You can tell me, at least."

"Sure I can tell you," Chick allowed. "That won't harm any one."

"Tell me, then. When did you see me?"

"About ten days ago."

"Where were you?"

"Counting the ties on the S. and O. road."

"Counting the ties?"

"Tramping into Shelby," Chick explained.

"That's not very definite, Nelson," said Reardon, with an increasing frown. "Where had you come from and where were you going?"

"I was tramping down from North Dayton, and hiking through this infernal burg before a gun could get me. I reckoned I would not be nailed in the night."

"Ah, it was in the evening, then?"

"That's what. Long about ten o'clock."

"Where were you?"

"I was plugging by the signal tower just before entering the town."

"And you saw?"

"I saw a man come down the long steps and make a quick get-away. I knew something had come off, but I did not wait to see what. I feared I might be taken in for the job. I lit out, Mr. Reardon, and that's all I knew about it until I read of it in the newspapers."

"Read about what?" growled Reardon, with his gray lips twitching slightly. "Read about what?"

"The murder in the signal tower," said Chick. "What else would I be likely to mean?"

"It's what you really mean that I want to know. You think, I infer, that you know who did it."

"I ain't bothering my nut about that, Mr. Reardon. It goes, mind you, all that I said a minute ago."

"That's all right, too, as far as it goes. But I want to know just what you think."

"I get you."

"Do you think you know who killed that man in the tower?" Reardon darkly persisted.

"Sure I know who did it," Chick grimly admitted.

"Who?"

"The man I saw coming down the steps just afore I came to the tower."

"You recognized him, eh?"

"I know him, now, all right."

"Do you know his name?"

"I ought to. 'Tain't long since I heard it."

"Tell me."

"Tell you, eh?"

"That's what—tell me!" scowled Reardon.

Chick drew forward in his chair again and dropped his voice still lower.

"Say, cut out this beating around a bush," he replied, now with an impatient growl. "I'm no lunkhead, Reardon, no more than you. You know whom I mean. You know whom I saw leaving the signal tower. If I speak his name, you know whose name it will be. It will be yours—James Reardon."

Reardon was ghastly pale, but otherwise outwardly calm.

"You think I was the man, do you?" he inquired.

"I don't think anything about it, Reardon. I know you were."

"You're wrong about that, Nelson."

"No, I'm not," Chick insisted. "I'm as dead sure of it as if I'd been at your elbow ever since."

"You are, eh?"

"That's what, Reardon, and it goes," said Chick. "But as I said before, I'll not give you away. I'm not a gink who would squeal on a friend. You can bank on that, Reardon, let come what may."

"Oh, I know you won't tell what you think," replied Reardon, with sudden vicious significance. "You'll never open your yap. Do you know why?"

"I dunno as I do," Chick allowed tentatively.

"Look there, then, blast you, and you'll know!" cried Reardon, pointing.

Chick swung round on his chair.

In an open doorway leading toward the front of the house, around to which they had stolen and noiselessly entered, stood Jake Hanlon, Link Magee, and Dick Bryan, as grim and threatening as a trio of wooden Indians.

Each held a shotgun aimed point-blank at Chick Carter's head.

"Sit quiet!" snarled Hanlon, the instant Chick turned. "If you stir foot or finger, there'll be more holes in your hide than there be in a sieve."

Chick instantly guessed the truth—that Reardon had in some way discovered the subterfuge, or been led to seriously suspect it. He knew that it would be utter folly to continue it. He accepted the turn of the tables with hardly a change of countenance, however, remarking dryly:

"As I said last night—don't shoot!"

"Don't stir, then," snarled Hanlon.

"Oh, I think too much of a whole hide to do that," said Chick. "What's it all about, anyway?"

"You'll find out when the time comes," snapped Reardon, rising and drawing a revolver. "Come in here, Link, and bring the sponge. We'll darned soon find out what this guy looks like when he's washed up."

"I'm with you, Jim," cried Magee, entering.

"You tie his hands behind him, Dick, and make sure you tie them fast," Reardon quickly added. "Be quick about it."

Chick knew he would gain nothing by resisting. He submitted without a word, but with a look of calm contempt on his stern face.

It took only a few moments to bind him securely, and Magee then proceeded to wash away with soap and water the last vestige of the detective's facial disguise.

"Now, hang you, you'll give it to me straight, perhaps," said Reardon, darkly confronting him.

"Give you what straight?" asked Chick coolly.

"Who are you?"

"It's up to you to find out."

"I already know, blast you!"

"Is that so? No need of asking, then."

"No need, indeed!" snapped Reardon. "You are that infernal New York detective, Nick Carter."

"All right," said Chick indifferently. "Let it go at that."

"Ain't I right?"

"You said you knew. It's not up to me to inform you. Furthermore, Reardon, neither you nor any of your gang will learn anything from me," Chick forcibly added.

Reardon swung round with an oath.

"Lend a hand, boys, and we'll put him in the underground room," he cried harshly. "We'll put him there for safe-keeping till we're ready to settle his hash. I want a talk with you fellows in the stable. This business has turned just as I suspected. Lend a hand and we'll lug him to the cellar."

CHAPTER IX.

THE LAST CALL.

It was eleven o'clock that morning when Patsy Garvan, not in the least wearied from having covered three miles on foot at nearly top speed, arrived in view of the Hanlon place.

Patsy was somewhat surprised to see that it appeared to be deserted. There was no sign of life in the house, nor in or around the stable.

"They must be in the house, surely," he muttered, crouching back of a wall south of the place. "It's dead open and shut that Reardon came out here, and that he expected to find the others here. Have they discovered Chick's identity, or what are they up to? I'll steal round back of the stable, by Jove, and try to get a nearer look at the house. I can make that point without being seen."

A detour back of the wall soon brought Patsy to a position where the stable hid him from the house. He then vaulted the wall and ran at top speed to the rear elevation of the barn, where he paused to listen.

Not a sound save the grinding of a horse's jaws came from within.

Patsy crept to a refuse window and looked in.

"Ah, there's Reardon's horse," he muttered. "The rascal is out here, all right, and he must be in the house with the rest of the gang. What they are doing is the question. Doing Chick, perhaps! By thunder, I must contrive to get sight of him and make sure, and do it without queering our game. I could see the house windows from inside the stable. Here goes, by gracious, let come what may."

Noiselessly, yet moving quickly, Patsy climbed through the small square window and dropped to the floor in the rear of the stable.

Passing around back of the stalls, in which four horses were then standing, Patsy then picked his way cautiously toward the broad open front door. He had covered less than half the distance, when he heard the steps of approaching men, and Reardon's voice fell harshly on his ears.

Patsy dropped back of a grain chest that formed an obscure corner with one of the walls, a concealment that enabled him to see most of the interior of the stable.

"It's a regular Nick Carter trick," Reardon was forcibly saying. "There's nothing else to it. It's a cinch."

His companions were Hanlon, Magee, and Bryan, who had just emerged from the house after having secured Chick Carter and confined him in the underground room.

Patsy crouched lower when all four men strode into the stable.

"But how did you get wise, Jim?" Hanlon demanded with a growl. "How in thunder did you get wise?"

"That's so," supplemented Magee. "What put you next?"

"The escape of the supposed tramp," said Reardon, fiercely shaking his head, though he still was pale and nervous.

"The escape of the hobo?"

"Sure thing. It was, as I said, a regular Nick Carter trick," Reardon went on bitterly. "There was nothing to it, boys, to my way of thinking. The whole business was a put-up job."

"That's plain enough, now," growled Hanlon.

"By Jove, they must have got Chick!" thought Patsy, feeling for his revolver. "I can see where I must butt in, all right."

"I knew a year ago, you see, that Barclay advised employing Nick Carter when the Dayton station was robbed," added Reardon. "I was train dispatcher, then, and next to the board of directors. That led me to suspect that Carter might be right here in town at the present time. That hobo trick almost convinced me of it. I clinched it, too, this morning by sending a telegram to Carter's New York office, asking when he could come here to take on a case."

"Great guns! that was a shrewd move, Jim," cried Bryan.

"I got an answer saying he was away," Reardon added. "That settled it, to my way of thinking, so I rushed out here to nail the supposed hobo."

"Waal, we've got him all right," put in Hanlon.

"Bet you we've got him," Reardon said with a snarl. "We'll put him away for keeps, too, after seeing how the cat is going to jump. There'll be a mess over his disappearance, but a bloodhound couldn't find him in that underground hole off the cellar."

"A two-legged hound will find him, all right," thought Patsy, much pleased to discover that Chick had not yet been slain. "They evidently think they have got Nick himself. That's as plain as twice two."

"But what's he here for, Jim?" Hanlon now demanded. "The railway crimes, of course."

"Nothing else?"

Nothing that I know of, Jake."

"By Jove, the chief is right," thought Patsy. "These other rascals don't suspect Reardon of the Glidden murder. He's alone in it, as Nick said."

"I'll be hanged if I see, Jim, why Carter came here to——"

"Easy! Who the devil is that chap?"

The interruption came from Bryan, while he instinctively reached for a gun.

The clatter of hoofs now fell on the ears of all.

A strange horseman was riding in from the road. He came straight to the stable and sprang to the ground, leaving his horse and entering.

"Which of you gentlemen is Mr. James Reardon?" he inquired blandly, as he came in.

"Holy smoke! it's the chief himself," flashed through Patsy's mind. "He's here because of my letter. He's here in the nick of time, too, by thunder."

The four men had drawn back a step or two and looked grim and frowning. Something in the cold, keen eyes of the stranger, however, as well as the subtle ring in his calm voice, warned them not to become aggressive.

"What do you want of Reardon?" demanded Reardon himself.

"I want to talk with him," said Nick. "Is he here? I was told in the Reddy House that here is where I would find him."

"That's right," Reardon admitted. "I'm the man—but who are you?"

"I am a New York detective. My name is Nick Carter."

"Nick Carter!"

Reardon echoed the name involuntarily, turning ghastly white.

His three associates looked as if staggered, and Hanlon fiercely muttered:

"Who the devil, then, is——"

"Shut up!" snarled Reardon, striving to pull himself together. "You are Nick Carter, eh?"

"Why, yes, certainly," said Nick, sternly eying him. "That seems to surprise you fellows."

"Suppose we are surprised," snapped Reardon. "That cuts no great ice. What do you want to talk with me about?"

"I want to learn why, Mr. Reardon, you sent a telegram to my New York office this morning."

"Who says I did?"

"Never mind who says it," Nick declared. "I know that you did, and what the message contained. What case do you want to put me on?"

Hanlon, Magee, and Bryan looked as if turned to stone. Reardon undertook to explain.

"It's a murder case, that of a friend of mine," he replied, with lips twitching.

"What name?"

"Glidden. He——"

"Killed in the K C signal tower, wasn't he?"

"Yes. He——"

"Oh, you needn't have wired me to look into that case," Nick cut in repeatedly, in a way that irresistibly shook the other's nerve. "I already have sifted that crime to the bottom."

"To the bottom!"

"Rock bottom," Nick sternly declared. "I know all about it—and who killed him!"

"You mean——"

"I mean that you were the man, Reardon," cried Nick, calmly confronting the haggard, unnerved rascal. "That was one way for you to get back at Olga Burdick. That was——"

"You lie! I——"

"Oh, there's nothing for you in denying it," Nick thundered, interrupting. "I have my assistants all around you. I know every move you have made. I've got your finger prints from the telegraph table, where your hand rested when you sent Sampson that fake death message. That alone is enough to convict you. If not enough, I can show that you were seen coming from the signal tower right after the crime was committed. I can show——"

Nick was cut off abruptly.

Aside from the fact that he now felt sure that both Chick and Patsy must have a line on the rascal, all of this was, of course, a good deal of a bluff on Nick's part, but one that he was convinced would prove effective.

Nor was he disappointed.

For Reardon cut in upon his threatening statements with a sudden terrific yell, at the same time reaching for his hip pocket.

"Get him, boys!" he shrieked. "Lend me a hand to get him! It's him, or us!"

To his intense surprise and dismay, however, the three men shrank away, as if averse to being drawn into a crime of which they had been ignorant, in so far as his part in it was concerned.

This seemed, then, to let the devil loose in Reardon! He snatched out a revolver, just as Nick was bounding forward to seize him, and a bullet sped by the head of the dodging detective.

There was no time for a second shot—from the rascal.

One came from a revolver in the hand of Patsy Garvan, however, as he sprang from behind the grain chest. The bullet tore through Reardon's neck, dropping him to the floor and inflicting a wound from which he died an hour later. He sank writhing at the feet of the detective, who kicked the revolver from his hand and then turned to Patsy.

"I thought I would find you here," he remarked calmly. "This will settle the case."

"You bet I'm here," replied Patsy. "They've got Chick, too, confined in the house."

"Not for long, Patsy," Nick declared. "Keep your eyes on these fellows, in case they decide to show fight."

"Oh, we ain't fools," growled Hanlon, scowling, but with a crafty gleam in his gray eyes. "We don't mix knowingly in such cases. We're on the square, we are."

The wisdom of the attitude the three rascals were taking appeared later. Though all three, in company with Hanlon's wife, were arrested and later brought into court, it could not be shown that they were in any way concerned in the Glidden murder, nor a case made against them for other crimes aside from the assault on Chick, which was not worth considering.

"It's about as I suspected," Nick remarked to his two assistants the following day. "Reardon did that job alone. We have cleaned it up, as I started in to do, and the confession he made just before he died confirmed my suspicions. Roy Croft is set right and Miss Burdick is very grateful. That's all very well, and it covers the ground we undertook to cover for a starter. That's good enough, then, for the present."

THE END.

In the next issue of this weekly, No. 131, out March 13th, you will be told of further adventures of Nick Carter and his assistants, with some of the desperate characters of which you have just read. The story is entitled "A Fatal Message; or, Nick Carter's Slender Clew."

THE HOTTEST PLACE ON EARTH.

The hottest region on the earth's surface is on the southwestern coast of Persia, on the borders of the Persian Gulf. For forty consecutive days in the months of July and August the mercury has been known to stand above one hundred degrees in the shade night and day, and to run up as high as one hundred and thirty in the middle of the afternoon. At Bahrin, in the center of the most torrid part of this most torrid belt, as though it were Nature's intention to make the place as unbearable as possible, water from wells is something unknown. Great shafts have been sunk to a depth of five hundred feet, but always with the same result—no water. Notwithstanding this serious drawback, a numerous population contrives to live there, thanks to copious springs, which burst forth from the bottom of the gulf more than a mile from the shore. The water from these springs is obtained in a most curious and novel manner. Machadores, whose sole occupation is that of furnishing the people of Bahrin with the life-giving fluid, repair to that portion of the gulf where the springs are situated, and bring away with them hundreds of skin bags full of water each day. The water of the gulf where the springs burst forth is nearly two hundred feet deep, but the machadores—divers—manage to fill their goat-skin sacks by diving to the bottom and holding the mouths of the bags over the fountain jets; this, too, without allowing the salt water of the gulf to mix with

it. The source of these submarine fountains is thought to be in the hills of Osmond, five hundred miles away. Being situated at the bottom of the gulf, it is a mystery how they were ever discovered, but the fact remains that they have been known since the dawn of history.

ON A DARK STAGE.

By ROLAND ASHFORD PHILLIPS.

(This interesting story was commenced in No. 127 of NICK CARTER STORIES. Back numbers can always be obtained from your news dealer or the publishers.)

CHAPTER XII.

AT NEWPORT.

Out of a sound sleep, Klein was suddenly awakened by a determined knocking upon his stateroom door. He crawled out of his berth, and peered from the half-opened window. It was still dark, but the boat had stopped. At first he thought they were at Fall River. Then he remembered that the *Providence* docked for an hour at Newport. When he turned the key and opened the door, he was surprised to find, standing there, two familiar figures. One was the *News* reporter; the other, the thin, dark-eyed man who had been his dinner companion.

Klein was so startled at beholding Tod that he quite forgot the other. His brain leaped to the truth at once. Tod had followed him, informed the authorities, and now——

His pleasant friend of the night before—who had so insisted upon his accepting the cigar, drew back the lapel of his coat. Klein saw the glittering badge pinned to the vest.

"We're at Newport," the man announced quietly. "There isn't any use making a scene. Get dressed as soon as possible, Klein."

Only for a second did Klein hesitate; then he bowed to the inevitable. Explanations would be useless. There was nothing to do but to obey. He was a suspected man, and being such must submit to the law. Any attempt to escape now would only injure his defense.

"I will be ready in five minutes," he said calmly.

"Very well," the officer replied.

Klein dressed, packed his bag, and followed the detective and the reporter down the stairs.

"Better see about your trunk, Klein," the detective suggested, when they reached the main deck.

This Klein did. Then the three walked quietly ashore. Klein seemed very calm, as did the detective. Tod was trembling with nervousness.

Once out on the big deserted wharf, lighted only by two yellow oil lamps, Jarge called to a cab driver who was standing beside a small refreshment shack. After the detective had displayed his badge, the cabby was all attention.

"Police station," Jarge commanded. "And don't waste any time about it."

He held the door open while Klein stepped inside the cab. Then, as if remembering the third person of the party, he turned to Tod.

"You had better go to a hotel. There'll be nothing for you to-night."

Tod demurred. "I'd rather go along and wait——" he began.

"Plenty of time in the morning to get what you want. We can't be annoyed by you newspaper chaps," Jarge snapped out. "Your paper isn't any too well liked by the police, anyway. I'll see you at the jail at seven o'clock."

He followed Klein into the cab. The driver cracked his whip, and a second later they were rattling over the cobble-paved street, leaving Tod standing ruefully on the dock.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN ALL-ROUND MYSTERY.

As the whistles were blowing for seven o'clock Tod presented himself at the Newport jail.

After the detective and his prisoner had departed in the cab, Tod had sought the nearest hotel. Here, after leaving strict orders to be called at six-thirty, he had tumbled into bed. On his way to the jail, which fortunately was only a short distance from the hotel, Tod stepped into a telegraph office, and sent a message to Reed, his city editor. It read:

"Have had suspect arrested. Will have whole story in an hour. TOD."

At the door of the jail he was met by a sour-looking man, who demanded his business.

"Tell Mr. Jarge that Tod, of the New York *News*, is here," he announced.

"Tell who?"

"Tell Jarge. What's the matter? Don't you know your own men?"

"Well, I ought to, young fellow," came the answer. "But that's a new name on me."

"You're crazy! Jarge is a detective. He arrested a man last night at my command. I want to see him."

Tod was annoyed at the apparent ignorance of the doorkeeper. The latter still frowned, and finally called to some one in an adjoining room. Obeying the summons, the second man put in an appearance.

"Jarge?" he repeated, after Tod had told him the same thing he had told the other. "Never heard the name before. He isn't a Newport detective."

Tod's confident air vanished, and a lump stole into his throat.

"You—you're sure?" he asked.

"Well, I'm the warden here," the second man announced.

"And no one came here last night with a prisoner—about three o'clock?"

"Not a soul."

Tod's heart dropped into his shoes. He grasped the brass railing of the stoop, then, followed by a laugh from the warden, lurched down the steps.

"What kind of a game did I run up against?" he asked himself, after he had put the jail well behind him. "Who the deuce is Jarge? And where in blazes did he take Klein?"

A ghost of a smile hovered about his lips. "I—I guess I've been stung again," he reflected, with a long face.

* * * * * * *

At a snow-white table in the dining car of the New England Express, en route to Boston, sat a thin man who possessed wonderful coal-black eyes and very long and

very white fingers. Every now and then he chuckled to himself; finally those long, white fingers dropped to the pockets of his vest, and brought out a silver-plated badge. He looked upon it a moment, rubbed it thoughtfully on his coat sleeve, and then, as if in praise of the shining piece of metal, said to himself:

"A pretty good job for a two-dollar badge—and a milk inspector's at that."

In Fall River, Hobart Klein, alighting from an early milk train, kept repeating to himself the question that had hammered at his brain ever since he had left Newport:

"Who was that detective? And what the dickens did he want me to get away for?"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BATTLE GROUND.

Klein, waiting at the station in Fall River for the local train that was to carry him to his destination, Hudson, puzzled over his night's adventure. Without a word of explanation the detective who had ordered him out of his stateroom on the *Providence*, once the docks had been lost to view, had commanded the cabby to drive direct to the railroad instead of the police station.

Here he calmly informed Klein that a milk train would come through at four o'clock, and that he could ride on it as far as Fall River. The detective also asked Klein's pardon for the trouble he had caused him, and hoped the remainder of his journey would be a more pleasant one.

But that was all. He turned a deaf ear to Klein's questions.

"We may meet again," was all he would say—and Klein fancied he detected an amused sparkle in the black depths of those remarkable eyes; "and if we do, possibly then I will explain."

So Klein stepped aboard the milk train, and the detective patiently waited for the New England Express.

The local out of Fall River brought Klein into Hudson at eight o'clock. The adventure on the river boat had not in any way weakened his purpose in going to Hudson. It had, in fact, increased his desire to get at the bottom of the Delmar affair. That Tod, the reporter, was following him with the avowed intention of frustrating his plans to find the real criminal, only lent added interest. Klein had fooled the reporter in New York, and had gained a second victory over him at Newport, aided, intentionally or not, by the detective. But it did not mean that he would be safe now from further annoyance.

The *News*, always anxious for the sensational, would push this case to the utmost. Perhaps even now they had a half dozen men working on the story. To outwit these men, all of whom must be cleverer than the colt, Tod, and to find the man or men guilty of killing Delmar was the task that now confronted Klein.

He reasoned, not unwisely, that to stand arrest and be taken back to New York, there to face the charges which would be brought against him, would be suicidal.

A new enemy had arisen—and a dangerous one. This was Tod and the sensational newspaper behind him. By twice outwitting the reporter, Klein had, to all outward appearances, admitted his guilt—proved he was anxious to elude the law. To this would be added the damaging evidence that, although paying for a full week at his boarding house, he had dropped from sight on the second day.

On the witness stand he would be forced to admit that he had been wearing Delmar's clothes, and that he had been in the latter's room all the evening. At this juncture, naturally, loomed the generous form of Mrs. Wold, whose testimony would riddle any defense he might have previously erected. And in case the landlady still clung to the story that she had been attacked, Klein would have an added charge to answer. His own story would be laughed out of court. The *News*, distorting the truth, would feature the trial in a dozen lurid ways. Public sentiment would be against him, and his trial would be little more than a mockery.

"In self-defense," Klein reasoned, "I cannot allow myself to be arrested until I have found some certain evidence to substantiate my claim of innocence." A grim smile quivered about his lips. "And the only clew I've got to work on is a brown suit and a straw hat. However, if I am to be a detective worth my salt, that ought to be sufficient."

CHAPTER XV.

GETTING ACQUAINTED.

Hudson boasted of a hundred thousand population. It was a quaint, old-fashioned, seacoast town, a center of fish and oyster activity, and, in the warmer months, a mecca for summer visitors.

The business part of the city lay a considerable distance away from the station, and after alighting from the train, Klein accepted the services of a decrepit hack, the driver of which—a typical Yankee with alfalfa whiskers and a high-pitched drawl—wanted to know where his passenger desired to go.

"There's jus' one fit place," he said. "That's the Harker House." He clucked to his reluctant steed. "Shall I take you there?"

"Maybe you can put me down at some boarding house," Klein suggested, after they had rattled across the cobbled court of the station and out onto the hard turf road.

"I jus' can," was the immediate reply. "Miss Kimbal's."

In ten minutes Klein was established in an old-fashioned green-shuttered house, within a few squares of the city hall. It was here, after a bountiful breakfast, and waited on by the landlady herself, that he began asking questions. He had given the woman his real name, after some deliberation. It was a rash thing to do, but it was unlikely that he would be looked for in the small city, and he reflected that an assumed name would only add to the bulk of evidence against him, in the event of his arrest. The ambitious young reporter, Tod, could be counted on not to give Klein's name to the police for a while, as his news sense would make him wish to keep it a secret until he could claim all the glory of capture for himself and his paper.

"What are the theaters in Hudson, Miss Kimbal?" Klein inquired.

"Well," she confessed, "I'm not much for theatergoing, Mr. Klein, only as concerns the stock company here. I always go there every week."

"A good company, I suppose?"

"Yes, indeed." Miss Kimbal sat down on the opposite side of the table. "They've been here for all of a year. And they have the nicest pieces. This week it's 'New England Folks,' and it's the sweetest thing! Miss

Lindner just brings tears to my eyes when she has to leave the old farm. She takes off her part wonderful. And it's lovely in the last act when she comes back and pays off the mortgage."

Klein smiled at the earnest description. "And where is the theater?"

She told him. That afternoon he walked through the streets of the town, surprised at the many modern stores, but at the same time amused by the characters he ran across. It was his first journey to the region of the New England Yankee, and, being Western born, he marveled at some of the types of the inhabitants.

"I'd swear some of those men were 'made up,'" he said. "I can imagine myself behind the scenes of a 'Way Down East' production. I used to say those characters were overdrawn, but won't any more. Why, they're underdrawn!"

Klein found the theater where the stock company was playing, and thoughtfully examined the large photographs in the lobby. Every face of the dozen odd members was a strange one to him. Even the names were unfamiliar. He learned, after reading the sign over the box office, that the company gave two performances a day, with the exception of Sunday, when no shows at all were given, and that the prices ranged from twenty-five cents to a dollar.

Outwardly the theater presented a good appearance, and apparently was run by a man who knew his business, and took a pride in doing so. It was situated on the main street, had a big lobby well filled with photographs, and swinging out in front was a fair-sized electric sign.

That night he attended the performance, and paid particular attention to the male members of the cast. And while the show was of the usual "rural" type, sprinkled with cheap sentiment, impossible situations, and stereotyped dialogue, and while the venerable old mortgage was dragged in brutally for the climax, still Klein realized that the principal actors possessed no little talent, and that in better productions they could do themselves justice.

To his experienced eye, all the company appeared to take the rural drama as a joke, and not only took undue liberties with their lines, but "kidded" one another in the most serious scenes. This, of course, was not apparent to the audience as a whole, but to Klein, who had participated in many similar affairs, the production of "New England Folks" seemed a burlesque.

The large and reception audience, however, as easily moved as children, wept with the misunderstood heroine, sympathized with the manly young farmer, laughed at the painful antics of the stammering comedian and watched the villain's dark plans unfold with increasing apprehension. They greeted the arrival of the paid-off mortgage with approving smiles, and at eleven o'clock left the theater satisfied with their thrills.

"Give 'em what they'll understand," was how one manager expressed himself to Klein, early in his stock career. "The older the situation the better. You've got to treat the small-town audiences like children. Soon as you get to handing them out the fine stuff—down goes your box-office receipts.

"And another thing I've learned," the same manager was wont to remark, "is that in a small town you've got the audience half won before they step into the lobby. They come to the theater to be amused. How about a big-town audience? Do they come in the same spirit? Well, I guess not! They plant themselves in front, and say: 'Come on! Trot out your show. I dare you to make me sit up and take notice!' Naturally, in this frame of mind, you've got to hand them a knock-out."

When Klein went back to his boarding house that night he weighed several things reflectively before he finally fell asleep. The first was this. The men engaged in New York by the Hudson Stock manager, among whom Klein felt certain Delmar's slayer was numbered, would not have arrived in town early enough to participate in the present week's bill. In all probability, they would be rehearsing.

"Wonder if there is any chance for me to get a 'bit' in the next piece?" he asked himself, realizing that only in this way could he effect an entrance behind the scenes without attracting suspicion. "I'll drop around there tomorrow and find out. Give me a week behind that curtain and I'll know where I stand."

CHAPTER XVI.

AT REHEARSAL.

In the Hudson Stock, as in the majority of small-town companies, there are a number of people, outside of the regular company, who work at what is known, in the vernacular of the stage, as "jobbing." These people are usually local aspirants who have had previous theatrical experience, quite often having been promoted from the "super" ranks.

Whenever a production calling for a large cast is in order, these jobbers are given the parts that remain after the regulars of the company have received theirs. As a rule, these parts consist of what are termed "bits"—that is, servants, soldiers, friends, and characters of a like type. The parts run from one or two words, up as high as a dozen "sides,"* provided, of course, the jobber is capable of handling it.

Many a prominent actor has successfully handled a bit—and again, many a prominent bit has successfully handled an actor. In more cases than one, a part of two or three sides has outshone the star's, and lifted an obscure actor to a high place on Broadway.

From the billing, Klein learned that the next week's production was to be "A Royal Family," an old stock success, and one in which he had played no less than four times. He knew the piece necessitated a large cast of principals, as well as many "supers," and felt confident that if he was to gain the seamy side of the curtain at all it would be during this production.

Cheered by this, Klein reported at the stage door at ten o'clock. Inside he found the company assembled on the bare stage, and the rehearsal in progress. Waiting until he might interview the stage manager, he sat down on a "prop" bench, and watched as the company read through the first act.

Some of the border lights were on, and at the stage director's left a "bunch" light cast its glare upon the open script. The various members of the company were grouped here and there, thumbing their parts, waiting for their cues, or else pacing up and down mumbling over their

*A side, in theatrical parlance, is one of the pages of typewritten matter that a part is composed of.

speeches. High up in the flies, and near the back of the stage, a scenic artist worked on the narrow paint frame.

Different members of the stage crew were hurrying back and forth, hammering, moving some of the heavy stuff, calling to one another. Pulleys were squeaking and doors slamming.

Finally, throwing down the script on the little table before the bunch light, the stage director lifted his voice above the din.

"Great Scott!" he shouted. "Either you men give up the stage, or I will. There is entirely too much noise. Our rehearsals are interrupted."

"I've got to get my stuff on the paint frame," spoke up the carpenter, not the least bit ruffled, "and we're a day late as it is."

"Well, you don't need to shout at the top of your voice," returned the stage director angrily.

"I suppose I can direct my crew by wireless, eh?" retorted the carpenter.

"Do anything you like—only give me a chance to continue these rehearsals. Your stuff can wait."

"Can wait, can it?" The carpenter tossed his head. "Well, you'll be the first one to make a kick if everything isn't ready for a dress rehearsal Sunday night. Hey there, Sam!" he yelled, turning his back on the director, and peering up into the flies. "Take up on your long line. This drop sags. Easy now! There, that's better."

The director clapped both hands to his head, and paced back and forth across the front of the stage. Meanwhile the company waited patiently, not in the least perturbed by the battle of words; such an encounter was a common occurrence.

Finally, with a sigh, the director returned to his script.

"All right," he announced wearily, running his fingers through his hair. "Begin with Miss Hart's exit. I'll do the best I can. Pay attention, everybody! You, Tanner! I told you yesterday to count ten after you step through the curtains, and before beginning that long speech. Now start over again—and try to remember!"

And so the rehearsal continued. Braces laid from chair to chair represented walls; a table was a tree. Invisible "props" were brought in and taken off. The director, disgusted with the way a certain scene was played, dropped the script, walked over, and played it himself. Now he was the king, again he assumed the rôle of the timid princess, and leaned his head tenderly upon the pink shirt of a perspiring and mechanical nobleman.

"Play for your points," he cried, again and again. "Don't let them get away from you!

"You, Metcalfe!" he exclaimed suddenly, pouncing upon a young man who had just made his entrance, and was addressing the king. "Have you any conception of the part you are playing? Do you realize you are one of the bodyguard? Then, for Heaven's sake, why do you stand there and sing your speeches? Open your mouth! Let the folks in the second row hear at least one word in fifty."

And then, after these lashings, when the act was finally ended, the director looked at his watch and announced that there was yet time to go through the whole thing again.

Klein, from his bench, felt quite at ease. Yet as each new man made his entrance upon the scene, he scanned him closely. Which were the newer members of the company, he wondered.

Suddenly, during the lull between the acts, Klein was conscious of being watched. Turning his head, he discovered a man beside him. Their eyes met. Klein recalled that the director had addressed this man as—Tanner.

Then, as if to explain his interest, Tanner spoke:

"Are you with us this next week?"

"That remains to be seen."

"I'm afraid you'll be disappointed," the other ventured. "All the smaller parts were given out yesterday. There isn't much use in your waiting around."

"Thanks, but I'll stay and see the director."

Tanner shrugged and walked around to the opposite side of the stage, ready for his entrance. Yet even when he was on the scene he kept his eyes fastened upon Klein. Later, when rehearsal had been dismissed, Klein approached the director, and questioned him as to a probable bit remaining open.

"Everything's taken," was the answer. "You ought to have been around yesterday." He swept Klein with a swift and keen glance. "Experienced?"

"Several years in stock," Klein answered.

"You've a good voice," the director observed. "Sing?"

"I have sung," Klein said, naming two or three pieces in which he had appeared.

"Good! We need half a dozen singers in this production. Only in one act. Can't pay much, but possibly next week we——"

"That's agreeable to me," interrupted Klein.

The director nodded. "All right. I'll want you in the morning at ten o'clock. What's your name?"

"Klein—Hobart Klein," was the unhesitating answer.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN ENGAGEMENT.

The announcement that he would be permitted to assume even so small a part in the coming production of "A Royal Family" was gratifying to Klein. He felt that in accepting this supernumerary position an opening wedge had been effected; it would put him in close touch with the members of the company, and with this desirable opportunity at hand, the future lay with himself. It might take him some time to accomplish what he had already determined upon, and he expected to meet with many unforeseen difficulties, but in the end he was confident that if Delmar's assailant was among the company he would discover him.

At ten o'clock the following morning Klein presented himself to the director, Mr. Bond. Rehearsals went on until one, when the company was dismissed for the matinée.

This was the regular routine, day in and day out, with the exception of Sundays. Rehearsals were called for nine or ten o'clock each day, depending upon the play in preparation, and these lasted until one. Then the company hurried out for lunch, and were back in the theater in time to make up for the afternoon performance at half past two.

Following the matinée the principals might snatch a few precious moments for study or to attend to their wardrobes. Then came dinner, perhaps a fifteen-minute rest,

and once more the stuffy dressing room and the grease paint.

The final curtain on the night performance seldom rang down before eleven o'clock, and after this the company scattered for home. Hot birds and cold bottles might be expected now and then with a road show, but in regard to a stock company, with two shows a day, and a weekly change of bill, such things were unmentionable. To insure a full envelope on Mondays, the members of a stock house were compelled to hurry home and "pound" on their next week's lines—bedtime depending upon the number of "sides" they had to "get down."

Those who were "quick studies," or those so fortunate as to have small parts, might indulge occasionally in an after-theater spread; but such events were not conducive to a clear brain in the morning, and generally resulted in a reprimand from the director.

On Sundays the stage crew held full sway, clearing out the old stuff, and hanging the new, in preparation for the dress rehearsal that was called sharply at eight o'clock that night, no public performance being given.

Klein learned that the rules of the Hudson Stock did not differ materially from those existing on the Pacific coast, and that the lists of fines were the same.

At the dress rehearsal Klein marveled at the difference between this night and the one barely two years previous. At that time he was playing the second business in "A Royal Family," and was one of the many favorites of the Los Angeles company. To-night he was a "super" at a salary of fifty cents a performance, making changes of costume that would put to shame an experienced protean actor.

In the first act, resplendent in uniform and gold lace, Klein was one of the five private secretaries to the king. At the opening of the second act he was a servant in the same household, changing quickly to a peasant in time for the curtain. In this character he led a folk song, off stage, and later, walked across the stage in company with supers armed with prop rakes, pitchforks, and other implements of honest toil.

The first scene of the next act found him as a butler in the house of a bishop; the second scene changed to the living room of the crown prince, and here the faithful Klein, after a mad dash to and from the dressing room, appeared as an obliging French barber.

In the last act, most of which was in pantomime, he assumed the rôle of a foreign diplomat, standing, hat in hand, like a mechanical doll, at the foot of the throne.

All the male supers dressed in one room, and scrambled for places at the make-up shelves, and for the possession of the two or three desirable mirrors.

Between supernumeraries and those having "lines," a firm but invisible barrier exists. It is the unwritten law of the stage. A principal considers an "extra" person, such as the supers are termed, as merely part of the stage settings—a background against which their own efforts stand out. As for becoming intimate with them, such condition, broadly speaking, of course, would be frowned upon.

This rigid rule was not lost upon Klein. He kept his place, and made no attempt to engage any of the company in conversation. To all outward appearances he was merely one of the extra people, and as such he was kept in his place. However, such a condition did not interfere with his powers of observation, and he kept both his ears and eyes open.

On Thursday night, while he was standing in an entrance ready to go on, Metcalfe, the "juvenile"—as an actor who plays light, young-man parts is called—walked over and began talking with him.

"You're not a new man in this business, are you?" he asked.

"I've had a little experience," Klein admitted.

"I thought so," commented Metcalfe. "You've got a bully make-up. I've noticed you in the barber scene—no ordinary super could handle the part as you do."

"Thanks!" murmured Klein, picking up his tray of tea things, and listening for his cue.

"And you might like to know," added Metcalfe, "that Bond has his eye on you. I think there'll be something better for you in the next piece."

Klein heard his cue spoken at that moment, so he did not have time to learn any more just then.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN THE CAST.

The hint Metcalfe had let drop was a forerunner to what actually happened, although Klein did not build his hopes too high beforehand. At the end of the week, when he was given his envelope containing the princely sum of six dollars, Bond, the director, told him to be at rehearsal on the following Monday. When he appeared, and the parts were being distributed, Bond handed him a thin, blue-covered script.

"Think you can get away with these three sides?" he asked.

Klein glanced through them, inwardly smiling. Three sides! Time was when he had mastered fifty sides in four days.

"I can make a hard try for it, Mr. Bond," Klein answered.

"That's the spirit! I guess you can get by. I'll help you along."

The first rehearsal was a success, and Bond smiled approvingly as Klein made his entrance at the proper cue, and delivered his lines. The director did not once interrupt.

"Very good, Mr. Klein," he announced warmly. "Very good indeed. I wish all my extras were as apt."

Klein was in each of the three acts, although most of the time he did nothing but stand around—a thing that is far more difficult to accomplish gracefully than the outsider imagines. During the succeeding rehearsals Bond put in additional business, and added to the lines, so that by the time Sunday came Klein's part was nearly doubled.

Now that the rigid line existing between the "extra people" and the principals had been crossed, Klein became more intimate with the company. From the first, Metcalfe had seemed to like him, and when the question of a dressing room arose, the former immediately invited Klein to share the one he occupied.

Metcalfe was the juvenile of the company—an attractive young fellow of perhaps twenty-five—who promised to develop into a strong favorite. As a rule, the juvenile men and the leading men are the most likely to be favorites, especially among the feminine portion of the audience; and in this, they are encouraged and aided by

the management. The heavy man comes next in line, followed by the less important principals, while the character man, owing to the many unsympathetic guises he is obliged to assume, comes last, perhaps, in the hearts of the audience.

Dodge, a sour, morose individual, well along in the forties, was the character man in the Hudson Stock. His dressing room adjoined Metcalfe's, and in this way Klein became better acquainted with him. During the first week, Klein had learned that Dodge, Metcalfe, and Tanner were the new arrivals in the company, and, that they all had been engaged at the Albany Hotel by the manager, Mr. Beyer, on the evening of Delmar's death, and brought immediately to Hudson.

Tanner, who played "second business," had been called to Klein's attention at the first rehearsal he attended by the remarks he had passed. Since then, however, and after Klein had been promoted to the dignity of a part, Tanner was apparently quite friendly.

Dodge spent a great deal of his time in the dressing room occupied by Metcalfe and Klein, but somehow Klein did not enjoy the companionship. The character man was a chronic kicker, and lived always in the past. Having supported the majority of the old-time stars, he would never admit that those of the present day were worthy of mention.

"In the palmy days," was his favorite way of beginning; or quite often: "When I supported Booth." And he generally closed his remarks with a protest against "the present-day commercialism of the great art."

He appeared to be so harmless that Klein almost immediately decided that such a man could not have been Delmar's assailant.

Metcalfe, the most congenial of the three suspects, was becoming more and more interested in Klein, and the latter, in turn, found himself liking the juvenile man.

So, at the end of the three weeks, when Klein was firmly established as a member of the Hudson Stock Company, he found himself as much at sea regarding the problem he had to solve as when he had first joined. All of the men whom he suspected treated him—outwardly, at least—with the highest respect.

Tanner was the best actor in the company, Klein mentally decided—a man possessing a great deal of personality, a remarkable voice, and an excellent stage appearance. To connect him with a brutal attack even remotely resembling the Delmar affair seemed an impossibility. However, in direct contrast, there was Metcalfe, scarcely more than a boy, against whom suspicion seemed equally at fault. And as for Dodge, the harmless character man, to suspect him of such an act seemed little short of ridiculous.

Perhaps, after all, Klein thought, the suspected men were innocent. Perhaps the real assailant was a thousand miles away from Hudson. Perhaps he had never left New York—or even Mrs. Wold's house. Maddern might have been mistaken in the matter of that brown suit.

"It was a pretty slim clew," Klein told himself. "Yet I feel that I'm on the right track. The three suspects appear harmless enough—but you never can tell."

One night, while Metcalfe and Klein were making up, Dodge and Tanner strolled into the dressing room. "Got a cigarette, anybody?" Tanner asked. "I don't dare smoke in my room—it's too near Bond's office. He caught me last week, and my envelope was five dollars shy in consequence."

Metcalfe laughed, and passed over a box. "Help yourself, but don't smoke them in my room. Bond can smell a cigarette a mile away."

Tanner took one. "Thanks, Metcalfe. I'll go back in the carpenter shop and do the dirty work."

He started for the door, but paused as he caught sight of a blue envelope on the make-up shelf.

"Hello, what's this? More mash notes?"

"That's the third note I've had this week," Metcalfe answered. "I've been invited to an after-theater supper, an automobile spin, and this last letter requests my honored presence at a dance on Saturday next."

"Lucky dog," muttered Tanner. "It certainly pays to be handsome, doesn't it?" He sighed in a resigned sort of way. "You're making a hit with the ladies, aren't you?"

"Well, who couldn't?" Dodge asked sullenly. "Who couldn't, I'd like some of you to tell me?"

"Well, you, for instance," Tanner answered, tipping the others a wink.

"Couldn't?" Dodge snorted. "Maybe not in the rôles I'm called upon to assume—it's always whiskers or a hooked nose or a limp for me; but just let me play a straight part! I'd show you young bloods! Why, when I was in Kean's company—a most cultured company it was, too—I was one of the few favorites. And mash notes? I had a dressing room filled with them. In those days—"

"In those days—those golden, palmy days," interrupted Metcalfe, "the women were not so particular."

Dodge tossed his head so vehemently that his beard loosened. Everybody laughed. Grumblingly he snatched up the bottle of spirit gum, applied it to his cheek, and pressed the crape hair back, patting it into shape.

"I'll have you know," he burst out finally, "that in the palmy days of the drama a man had to be an artist first of all. Only then could he win and hold the admiration of the ladies. Yes, sir. And now—poof! Any upstart who can bead his lashes and wear good clothes, and make love to—"

"Here, here," interrupted Tanner dramatically. "You're getting too personal. Metcalfe might object."

"Fire away," the juvenile man retorted. "I'm used to it. That's the penalty we pay for being handsome."

Dodge tramped out of the room, muttering something about "young fools."

"I'd rather be a young fool than a has-been," Tanner cried. But the character man did not see fit to answer this thrust.

"Well, returning to the subject we started upon," Tanner went on, "I've had several invitations out myself. I guess this stock company is a social favorite here."

"That's what it is," Metcalfe agreed. "And, Mr. Beyer told me when he left town last week that he wanted all the members to get acquainted with the better class of citizens. His company has always been popular in this town, and, from a box-office standpoint, it's the right thing to do."

"I'm keen on society myself," Tanner ventured to remark. "There's nothing I like better than to meet the right people. From the few I've seen out in front, this town is well supplied."

"The summer colony here is second to Newport," Klein

said. "Did you notice the left-hand box night before last?"

"Yes, I did," said Tanner.

"Those were the Lydeckers," Metcalfe volunteered. "The old man owns the theater, and the whole family takes an interest in the stock company. I've an invitation to a dance at their home for Saturday night."

"Really?" exclaimed Tanner. "Well, you are lucky, Metcalfe. Couldn't you smuggle Klein and me in?"

"Won't need to do any smuggling," said Metcalfe. "The Lydeckers are very hospitable. They are always glad to have members of the company at their affairs."

"Good enough! What do you say to it, Klein? Like to dash into society for one night?"

"If it is agreeable to Metcalfe," answered Klein, "and he is certain there will be no objection on the part of the host."

"Objections be hanged! Didn't I tell you everything would be O. K.? A crowd of the young folks are coming around after the show Saturday night, and I'll introduce you fellows."

CHAPTER XIX.

A CHANGE OF "PROPS."

Later that same evening, when Klein was removing his make-up—he was alone in the dressing room, Metcalfe being through after the second act—he discovered a memorandum book on the floor. As he picked it up Tanner came hurrying into the room.

"I've dropped my——" he began; then, noticing the book in Klein's hand, he stopped with: "Found it, did you? Good for you."

In passing over the book a newspaper clipping fluttered out. Klein caught it.

"Guess this is yours also, isn't it?"

Tanner looked at the clipping, and laughed. "I don't want that." He turned and went out of the room. "Much obliged for the book, though. Thought I'd lost it," he called back.

Klein then proceeded to lather his face with cold cream, and, after he had wiped off the last of the grease paint, picked the clipping up from the make-up shelf and idly read it.

Apparently the item had been torn from a local society column, for it gave a detailed description of a fancy-dress ball that had been held at the Lydecker home a few weeks previous. And since the Lydecker family had been made the subject of conversation earlier in the evening Klein read through the clipping with added interest.

"Tanner must be interested in society affairs," he told himself. "Rather an odd field for a stock actor, though."

He dropped the clipping on the make-up shelf, and later used it to wrap around a stick of grease paint. After this, he promptly dismissed the subject.

He was among the last to leave the theater, and, once outside, hurried directly to his boarding house. Klein had been given a twenty-side part for the coming week, and, as Bond expected all of the cast to be letter-perfect on Friday, he decided to "pound" on his lines for an hour before retiring.

He had sent for his trunk during the first week of his stay, but had not unpacked it all. Aware that he needed additional wardrobe for the new piece, he decided, suddenly, to rummage through the trunk and find out exactly how he stood in the matter of character paraphernalia.

For the better part of an hour he busied himself with this task, picking out the clothes he needed and sorting over his wigs. In shaking out an old coat something dropped to the floor. And when he picked it up an exclamation rose to his lips.

It was a photograph of Delmar.

"I'd forgotten about this," Klein muttered to himself. "Poor old Delmar sent it while I was in Los Angeles—just about a year ago. It's the best picture he ever had taken."

He placed the photograph upon his dresser and finished unpacking. Finally, when ready to retire for the night, and while he was gazing idly at the photograph, a sudden idea came to him. The more he considered it the more plausible it became.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed under his breath. "Maybe it will work. Maybe it will prove I am on the right trail, at least."

On the following morning he put the photograph into his pocket, and, after a hurried breakfast, started for the theater. Rehearsal had been called for ten o'clock, and the first act was on when he arrived. As he was not needed until near the end of it, Klein walked back to the property room.

Only one or two of the stage crew were on hand, and the property room was deserted. Klein stepped inside, found the heavy silver frame he was looking for, removed the photograph already in it, and inserted Delmar's. This done, he made his way back to the stage and sat down in the first entrance, awaiting his cue.

The stage setting for the second act of that week's bill was a living room. It was elaborately furnished, and every one of the cast, at one time or another, made an entrance upon it. Among the numerous "props" on a big library table in the middle of the room was a photograph in a heavy silver frame.

This photograph played a prominent part in the act, and, following the business of the script, each of the characters was supposed to pick it up and pass remarks upon it. Of course, as the audience never saw the picture, the property man inserted the first photograph he happened to have on hand.

Klein knew this, and, in working out his idea, had managed to make the change without detection.

At the afternoon performance, casually walking across the stage before the scene was arranged, he noticed that Delmar's photograph was still in the frame and that the frame had been placed in its usual position upon the table. Evidently the property man and his assistants, a class known as the "clearers" on the seamy side of the curtain, had not been aware of the change.

Klein was on the stage at the "rise," and, as he assumed the rôle of the butler, was on the scene during the greater part of the action.

In the first entrance Mr. Bond, the director, was standing before his desk. The orchestra had stopped.

"Clear, please," he shouted, warning off the last of the stage crew. "Are you ready, Klein?"

"All ready, Mr. Bond," Klein answered, kneeling before the open fire.

At a nod the electrician manipulated his switches; in the other entrances the men in charge of the calciums were

regulating the carbons in the lamps. Presently the arc lights began to hum.

The director, with a final glance that took in everything, pressed his finger against an ivory button and the curtain lifted.

TO BE CONTINUED.

A WOLF BOY: A TRUE STORY.

By R. D. MARTIN.

Every boy knows the story of Romulus and Remus being nurtured by a she-wolf, and the story is generally regarded as being incredible, and all kinds of explanations are given to account for the existence of such a legend. Now, I do not wish for a moment to contend that the story is a true one; but I would like to point out there is no real reason for regarding it as incredible. Wolves have been known to do, even in these modern days, exactly that which the forest mother of Romulus and Remus is credited with. There are several well-authenticated cases in India, of children having been adopted by these fierce animals. Not long ago, a little girl child about two years old was rescued from a wolf. Strange to say, she died almost immediately after she had been rescued. Indeed, this is the fate of all children who have been found in India under such circumstances, with one exception. That one exception is known as the Wolf Boy of Agra. I myself have seen him, and as I have never seen his story in print, I shall tell it here as I was told it by the good missionary who had charge of the Orphanage at Secundra, near Agra, in which the Wolf Boy lived.

Eleven years ago I paid my first visit to Agra, and, making the rounds of the mission there, I came in due course to the Orphanage, and my host first pointed out the Wolf Boy and then told me his story.

I saw before me a young man of about twenty, of most repulsive aspect He was quite idiotic, and could only make strange, unearthly noises in lieu of speech. He was quite harmless, but the grin with which he greeted me, and the way in which he drew up his upper lip, reminded me of the way in which a savage dog snarls at a stranger, and made me feel as if I should not care to be left alone and unarmed in his society, despite the assurance which I obtained as to his quietness.

He had been rescued about fifteen years before under the following surprising circumstances:

Some natives in the kingdom of Oude, of which Lucknow is the capital city, came one day to an English official to say that they had seen something which bore the appearance of a small boy running on all fours. They had pursued it, but it ran with great swiftness, and disappeared into the hole of a wild beast.

The curiosity of the Englishman was aroused, and at his direction an attempt to smoke out the creature was made.

The attempt proved successful. Out dashed a great she-wolf from the mouth of the hole, and behind it came the boy. The wolf escaped, but the boy was captured after a fierce struggle, in which he behaved like a young wolf snapping and snarling, and attempting to bit his captors. The age of this queer creature could only be guessed at. It was put at five or six years, and this is probably correct. It is supposed that the wolf, deprived of her cubs, stole it in infancy and adopted it in place of her own offspring, and that the baby, too small to be frightened, took naturally to its strange nurse.

All the habits of the boy were those of a wolf. At first he would coil himself up all day in a dark corner, and wake up at night, desiring to prowl about. With great difficulty he was accustomed to cooked food, for he much preferred raw flesh, and was especially fond of gnawing bones after they had been buried in earth.

At last he was tamed and brought round to civilized habits; but the twenty years which have elapsed have not sufficed to alter the wolflike appearance of this poor fellow, whose early life has deprived him both of reason and powers of speech.

ALL ABOUT BEES' STINGS.

The bee's sting is formed of a substance known as chitin. It is hard and brittle, and ends in a fine point, furnished with a number of hooks, the latter rendering it difficult for the bee to withdraw the sting from the close skin of the unlucky individual on whom it may have chosen to vent its spite.

In its haste to leave the scene of its vicious attack, the bee often breaks violently away from the stinging apparatus, leaving the sting in the wound, and this necessarily causes serious injury to the insect, from which it dies soon afterward. If the bee takes time to withdraw the sting carefully, by slowly revolving its own body, it sustains no injury whatever.

In order that the sting may penetrate securely, it is supported by two sheaths, between which it is pressed directly into the skin. This is done with great force and astonishing rapidity. At the same moment, the venom bag opens, and the poisonous fluid it contains is injected through the hollow sting into the wound.

Before the bee stings, it ascertains, by means of its feelers, whether the object upon which it has settled would be affected by the sting. The insect appears instinctively to know the most sensitive parts of the body, such as the eyelids, the nose, the ear, et cetera, and its attack is, as a rule, so sudden that the sting is in the flesh before the victim has any opportunity whatever of defending himself.

A practical beekeeper, however, recognizes the approach of a vicious bee by its peculiar humming, and can thus defeat the intentions of the bloodthirsty insect.

Some individuals regard a bee's sting and its consequences in much too serious a light. The most disagreeable part about it is, perhaps, the suddenness with which it is inflicted, and the great swelling of the muscles which frequently ensues; but, as a rule, one soon becomes accustomed to the action of the poison, and with every fresh sting the inconvenience diminishes.

The effects of a sting can be considerably alleviated by the application of substances containing alkalis; the damp end of a cigar often moderates the pain, but there is no sure remedy for everybody.

Some people, indeed, are so sensitive that the sting of a bee will bring on serious illness. On the other hand, a celebrated medical authority claims to have demonstrated that the most obstinate and chronic rheumatism can be cured by applications of one or more bee stings. The remedy is, we suspect, one which few patients would have courage to try.

THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

Selling Lifeblood.

A new business has come to light. The members of it are persons with plenty of healthy red blood in their veins, and their profession is selling this blood for transfusion into anæmic patients.

Blood thus sold brings fifteen dollars per transfusion and upward. There is no market price, and it is unlikely there will be one, because, in addition to healthfulness, the blood transfused must agree with that of the patient in certain pathological particulars.

The interesting disclosure of men who make extra money by retailing their blood came about through inquiries at the New York City hospitals to see if any of them had such an experience as Beth Israel, on the East Side. Israel needed blood for three patients, and advertised for men to supply it. One hundred men applied, only too eager to earn the money.

Build New Zeppelin Every Three Weeks.

That Germany has not lost its faith in Zeppelin airships is shown by the activity in building new ones. One Zeppelin is being finished every three weeks at Friederichshaven. A correspondent who arrived here from Germany told of seeing one of the newest airships. It has four motors of 200 horse power, and can carry an equipment of eight tons at a speed of from forty to sixty miles an hour.

Battle With Their Fists.

Much of the recent fighting has been on the order of a football rush. Of the operations north of the River Lys, the military review says:

"The operations have been attended by great hardships because of the bad weather. The cold, liquid mud in which the men have had to move has got into the breeches of their rifles. This made it impossible to shoot. The fighting consequently has been with the butt end of muskets and even with fists.

"According to an expression used by one of their leaders, the soldiers are literally blots of mud. There has been organized a system by which they can bathe and change their clothes when they leave the trenches. This they appreciate very much. Their unfailing good humor helps them to support in a wonderful way the hard life that the winter is inflicting upon them."

How it Feels to be Dead.

The papers recently told how a surgeon had restored a woman to life after she had been dead ten minutes. The woman was Mrs. Walter W. Akers, of Los Angeles, Cal. While an operation was being performed on her, her heart stopped beating; there was no pulse; there was no response to the usual tests. The patient was dead. Then the surgeon who was in charge, Doctor Hutchinson, thrust his hand into an incision which had been made in her body and gently massaged her heart back into action. As his hand contracted and dilated the heart, she began breathing again, and soon rallied.

From a medical point of view the case was a wonder, and is still more so, now that Mrs. Akers has completely recovered. She now describes her experiences during the brief period when she was lifeless.

"I have no recollection of where my soul went," she said; "but I have a firm, unexplainable conviction that I actually died and that during those minutes of death my soul left this body and began, at least, its journey to the great, mysterious beyond. I can recall nothing of what my soul experienced, but yet there is another unexplainable conviction that a great unearthly power sent it back into my body.

"When I regained consciousness, there was a strange peace within me. It was as though I were waiting for something wonderful to happen to me.

"During all the ages no one has caught a glimpse of the life hereafter and returned to tell of it," she continued. "Then, why should I? When the Creator sent my soul back into my body, He erased the memory from my mind."

Mrs. Akers firmly believes that God sent her soul back into her body because its work upon this earth was not accomplished.

The Earth 100,000,000 Years Old.

That the earth is about 100,000,000 years old is the assertion of George F. Becker, of the United States Geological Survey. He bases his opinion on the result of investigations into the formation of the earth's surface. Becker delivered an address on the subject at the meeting of the Geological Society of America, in Philadelphia, Pa., recently. James H. McGregor, of Columbia University, reported at the meeting that the "missing link" had been discovered. It was a skull found on the island of Java, showing all the characteristics between man and ape.

Big Chicken With Four Legs.

William Devening exhibited a four-legged chicken at the poultry show in Jerseyville, Ill. The bird weighs eight pounds and was raised this year on the Devening farm, near Nutwood. The extra pair of legs are located between the regular limbs and the tail. A peculiarity of the bird is the fact that it has two alimentary canals.

Science to Get Noted Brains.

Three noted scientists attending the conference of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, held in Philadelphia, Pa., declared themselves in favor of willing their brains to science for research work. They are Doctor L. O. Howard, of the department of agriculture, Washington; Doctor H. Skinner, of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Science, and Professor Edward C. Pickering, noted astronomer of Harvard University.

Enough Horseshoes to Make Him Lucky.

Ordinarily if a person has one horseshoe dangling in his room or office he feels he is entitled to good luck. Therefore, if one has collected several hundred stray horseshoes, he ought to feel safe in taking at least a gambler's chance on any old thing.

Floyd W. McIlvaine, insurance agent and B. & O.

baggage-master, at Lorain, Ohio, has collected more than 300 horseshoes. While McIlvaine has been prosperous in his business, his fad for horseshoes has brought luck to his business partner, S. H. Williams, Congressman for the Fourteenth Ohio district. Williams has been elected to everything he ever ran for.

Ask Carnegie Medal for Boy.

A movement has been started to secure a Carnegie hero medal for Harold Olson, a sixteen-year-old boy, who discovered a broken rail on the Grand Rapids & Indiana Railroad tracks south of Leroy, Mich., and, running half a mile, flagged a passenger train with between 200 and 300 persons aboard.

Rats Eat Litter of Pigs.

A story sounding almost incredulous comes from Wiota, Pa., where rats grow as large as full-grown cats. William B. Zartman, a farmer, moved a sow with a litter of pigs, just born, from their stable into the barn to protect them from the extremely cold weather. During the night, according to Mr. Zartman's statement, the whole litter of eight pigs was carried off and eaten by rats.

German Tells of Field Life.

A German officer in the field has sent a letter to the Frankfort *Gazette*, describing the manner in which he and his detachment of troops were compelled to live while in an advanced position before the enemy. A translation of the letter follows:

"It is nearly impossible to get any victuals. The French peasants declare: 'Nix sucre, nix riz, nix sel, nix macaroni, rien du tout, Monsieur Lieutenant!' (No sugar, no rice, no salt, no macaroni, absolutely nothing, Mister Lieutenant.) The poor people are glad, if they themselves receive from our provision trains, which pass once in a while, a little soldiers' bread. Generally they live from milk furnished by the few cows which were left to them under orders emanating from the commander of Metz, from potatoes, beets, beans, and fruit, found here in immense quantities, especially apples, plums, and yellow plums.

"At Mazieres, in France, where we remained for nine days, I was able to take my meals in an inn. We could obtain nearly everything except butter and milk, but at relatively high prices—sugar at nine cents a pound, coffee at forty-seven cents a pound, salt at six cents a pound, et cetera. Here naturally nothing of the kind may be obtained, and consequently I have to eat what my soldiers cook. Naturally, no delicacies, but we like the food anyway, as we are very hungry.

Crowds Watch Firemen Fighting With Spite.

"There'll be a hot time in the old town to-night."

As Perry Snow, a night watchman, at Joplin, Mo., passed the Rex billiard parlors, 413 Main Street, at 4:30 o'clock one morning, recently, he heard an electric piano grinding out that popular melody of the vintage of 1898.

Perry soon caught the rhythm of the tune, and his feet began to do a lively double shuffle on the cement walk. "I'll be blessed if dat ain't de ole hot-time tune de sojer boys uster sing ober in Kentucky when dey wuz a-gwine to fight de Spanyerds. My goodness, dat sounds like reg'lar music to me. Dat tune's de propah smoke, dat tune is. Smoke? 'Pears like I smell smoke. I jes' sniff it somewhar."

Watchman Snow began to sniff again, and sure enough it did come from the Rex parlors. On investigation he found that the room was filled with smoke, and was pouring out of the cracks in the doors. There was no need for further chatter with himself, and he immediately notified the fire department.

In a few moments the entire fire-fighting force of the town was at the Rex parlors.

"There'll be a hot time in the old town to-night," the piano was playing when the firemen broke into the place.

"I should say there would be," mused Fireman "Bill" Applegate, as he carried a chemical into the place and dashed at the piano which was smoking from every key.

"Well, what do you know about that?" he exclaimed; "that red-hot tune has set the piano on fire!"

In some way the electric piano had started playing and the motor got its wires crossed, and the piano was smoking from heat cause by a "short."

Even after the firemen had remedied that evil, the piano seemed reluctant about quitting "hot time in the old town."

Finally it stopped of its own accord and the firemen returned to their stations, but as they went to bed they all caught themselves humming: "There'll be a hot time in the old town to-night."

As to Perry Snow, the watchman, he says he hasn't had such a good laugh since the Jackson boys poured soft soap in the Reverend Washington's plug hat.

Girl and Her Finance Killed.

Miss Stella McElfresh, twenty, and her fiancé, Phillip Coslew, twenty-three, were killed when an Illinois Central train struck the closed buggy in which they were riding home from a party at Barnett, Ill.

Rent Land for Big-gun Tests.

The Bethlehem Steel Company has leased about five miles of the land bordering on the Delaware Bay shore, extending from Cape May Point village to Fishing Creek village, on which it will test big guns. The company has contracts for the erection of buildings, and several residences are to be provided for officers and men.

That portion of the Delaware Bay over which the guns can range is composed of flats with water only a few feet deep at high tide and partly bare at low tide. Very few inhabitants live along the territory chosen, and those who do are being provided for in other sections of Cape May.

A system of telephones is being erected to cover every portion of the lands leased. On clear days guns can be shot so that shells can be driven fourteen miles seaward without danger of hitting passing ships.

General Villa to Learn More About Fighting.

General Pancho Villa, who has done a bit of fighting himself in Mexico, has turned fight promoter in connection with the Willard-Johnson battle, now scheduled for March 6th. He has given Jack Curley permission to stage the big fight in Juarez, across the border from El Paso, Texas. Doubtless Villa has arranged to get in on the proceeds, as he has done whenever moving pictures have

been taken in Mexico. From his experience with Mexican generals he doubtless thinks he knows something about the double cross, but he will learn considerably more if he continues to fraternize with American fight promoters.

The promoters have arranged for Jess Willard to appear in some moving-picture films, for which he will pull down a nice little wad of money, while waiting for the fight. Perhaps he will have some theatrical engagements, too, as March 6th is a long way off.

Jack Curley says that while in El Paso, Texas, he received word from Jim Jeffries, ex-heavyweight champion, that Jeffries would be on hand to help Willard train. Jeffries is reported to have disposed of his interest in a café in San Francisco to his brother Jack. Passage of the antiprize-fight law in California is said to have moved Jeff to take this action.

Would Take All the Cotton.

London papers give some prominence to the following letter from Arthur Kitson, a well-known inventor of lightning apparatus:

"Surely the easiest and most effective way of settling the contention with the United States is for our government to contract to take the entire cotton or copper supplies for the next year or two. This would not be a great undertaking and would be a very profitable transaction for the government. It would effectually deprive the Germans of securing supplies from neutral countries and would shorten the period of war considerably.

"We could supply neutral countries in such quantities as we believed would satisfy their located demands. All the United States requires is a market for these two products."

No Dueling During War.

A suspension of all dueling has been declared in France because of an incident which arose recently during a discussion in a café. A prominent swordsman became angry in a discussion of the grand strategy and issued a challenge to his adversary. Witnesses present declared that a Frenchman must not kill one of his own countrymen during the war, so the duel has been postponed until peace is declared.

Women in Biggest Ski Club.

The ambition of the University of Wisconsin Ski Club to become the largest and most active skiing club in America already has been filled.

With an order for thirty-two new pairs of skis for new members and with forty-two of its members already equipped with skis, the club now is the largest body of active participants in the sport organized as a club in America. But it is not unique on that account alone. It is the only ski club in the United States to which women members have the same rights and privileges as the men members.

Says Clinching Spoils Boxing.

"No wrestling or hugging allowed," reads article two of the Queensberry code.

"If that rule was enforced, as it should be, farcical contests like the McVey-Johnson affair would be eliminated," declares a New York expert. "If a ban were placed on needless clinching, the principals in a bout would have to depend on blocking, ducking, footwork, and good, clean hitting. In that case the bouts would be a great deal more interesting, there would be less stalling, and the modern boxers would soon become as competent as the old-timers were reputed to be.

"As it is, the novice finds he is hopelessly 'up against it' when opposed to a man who follows the hit-and-clinch style, which is so objectionable to spectators. The latter takes no chances, but dives in and holds after every lead. It is impossible to make a good showing against this style, and the novice is forced to follow similar tactics in self-defense. The result is another boxer spoiled, so far as ring followers are concerned."

Woman, Seventy-two Rolls Score of 225.

You may have heard of John Jones or Tom Green bowling 180 or 200. In Whitestone, L. I., they have a woman, seventy-two years old, who thinks nothing of rolling 220 or better. She is Mrs. Ernest Borneman, and she's a grandmother.

Everybody in Whitestone is talking of Mrs. Borneman's high score of 225, made at the last meeting of the Jolly Poodle Club, the membership of which is confined to the women of the city by the Sound. Some of the folks of Whitestone seem to think that Mrs. Borneman's bowling is a mere joke, but she assured them all that she will take any of them on and hand them a trouncing.

Braves to Have a Fine Home.

The new grounds of the Boston National League baseball club, in Allston, will be the largest in the country in size and seating capacity, President James E. Gaffney said, after a discussion of the plans by the board of directors.

Forty thousand two hundred and eighty-two seats will be provided, he said. Of these, 16,931 will be in a one-story grand stand, so constructed that a second deck may be added later; 18,015 will be built in bleachers back of first and third bases, admission to which will be fifty cents; and 5,336 seats will be provided to the right of center field for the twenty-five-cent patrons. Center-field limits will be 400 feet from the home plate and 460 feet from the grand stand.

There will be virtually no "sun field." The grounds will be laid out to face the northeast, so that the sun glare will not be strong in any of the outfield positions. The playing field is to be sunk fifteen feet below street level.

Never Wears a Hat.

An aged man with no hat upon his head and a Bible constantly in his hand is to be seen daily on the streets of College View, a suburb of Lincoln, Neb., the seat of the Seventh Day Adventist College of Nebraska. The man is attempting to obey the biblical command to "pray without ceasing."

Occasionally he leaves the streets of the village and the college campus and wanders to the Fairview Farm, of W. J. Bryan, not far away, praying aloud or silently as he walks. He is known to nearly every one, and few molest him. Mentally he is alert, and no one has seen fit to question his sanity.

In order to follow literally the teachings of the Bible, he says, one must constantly have a prayer upon his lips. This prayer must not be a cold, formal affair—it must come from the heart and be said with all fervor and earnestness. The desired result will not be obtained

unless the hat is removed, and it therefore follows one must go about bareheaded at all times.

Long past middle age, but vigorous and in good health, the devout follower of the Scriptures for four years has practiced his hobby. Neither the coldest day of winter nor the hottest day of summer can induce him to cover his head.

Big Bobsled Driven by Aeroplane Propeller.

Making more noise than an artillery battery, a big bobsled was driven by an aëroplane engine through the streets of Callao, Mo., the other day. The strange craft was built by Victor Grove, a lumberman of the Chariton Valley.

As the aëroplane sled went through the town, its noise brought people running from their homes; it was covering the roads at thirty miles an hour. The motive power was a propeller with nine-foot blades, up in the air, like a windmill. A six-cylinder aëroplane engine drove the propeller. The operator had a steering wheel like that on an automobile, which turned the front runners.

"Wild Bill" Now a Manager.

"Wild Bill" Donovan, former twirling star of the Detroit Tigers, and later manager of the Providence International League club, has taken formal charge of the Yankees, the New York American League club.

The ceremonies were very simple. Donovan reported to Captain T. L. Huston and Colonel Jacob Ruppert, junior, the new owners, and they told him that the club was his—and to "go to it."

Donovan had little to say about his plans. He stated he hadn't had time to get acquainted with the situation yet. He intimated that he would first pick the club's training place, and would then turn his attention to bolstering up the team by trades and purchases.

Makes Bogus Coins in Prison.

A pair of counterfeit molds for making half dollars was found hidden under goods in the saddletree shop within the walls of the penitentiary at Jefferson City, Mo. It was the property of one of the convicts, and so far as the prison officials know only about seven dollars of the spurious money had been made before the plant was discovered.

William Broandon, from Lafayette County, serving five years in the penitentiary, had the counterfeiting plant in his cell and manufactured about thirty counterfeit half dollars from Babbitt metal. He is serving a sentence for forgery.

Much of the counterfeit had been passed on convicts Christmas Day. As that was a holiday for the inmates, stands were operated that day by convicts for selling fruit, soft drinks, tobacco, and cigars.

Brothers Fight Over a Girl.

Jaris Wood, eighty-two, died at his lonely cabin home in the clearing on the eastern slope of Teneriffe Mountain, East Brookfield, Mass. Wood was born in the house where he died, April 10, 1831. He was married at Spencer, December 31, 1862, to Miss Charlotte Squires.

Wood's health recalls the story of how he and his brother John conducted the lonely 100-acre farm on the east slope of Teneriffe Mountain, and, although in each other's company each day for nearly fifty years, neither addressed the other. John died at the home in the clearing in the summer of 1908.

According to the story, the estrangement of the two brothers occurred at the time of Jaris' marriage to Miss Squires in 1862. Both were suitors for the hand of the young woman, and it is said by some, never contradicted by either brother, that they fought a duel to see which would be the lucky man. Jaris won, according to the story, and went to Spencer and was married.

Fate of the Peace Palace.

A special correspondent of *Le Journal*, on a tour through Holland, describes in that paper a visit to the palace of peace at The Hague on photographs of which he says the Dutch are now writing:

"For sale or for rent owing to bankruptcy. May be used as barracks or for moving-picture show. Water and gas on every story. Apply to the Angels of Peace."

The correspondent failed to find the curator of the peace palace, but was received by the latter's secretary, who conducted him to the hall of justice, the walls of which were adorned with the pictures of the twenty-six heads of nations who took part in The Hague peace negotiations, from the late President McKinley to Czar Nicholas, of Russia. In explaining the decorations of the room, the secretary said:

"Six of these men died by assassination, others died a natural death, and the remainder are to-day at war."

Enforces Piety for "Grub."

C. F. Sweley, a big rancher living near Mondak, Mont., has a rather novel way of letting "hobos" and tramps pay for their "hand-outs" when they have no money.

When a member of the foot travelers' fraternity applies at this ranch for something to eat, and has no money, Mr. Sweley informs him that if he will "return thanks" to God, he will get something, and the better the job the bigger the hand-out. Sometimes an exceptionally clever applicant is taken into the dining room and given a square meal.

Make Man Eat and Work Like a Horse.

A band of "possum" hunters in Caldwell County, Ky., introduced a new form of punishment when they took a man accused of not providing for his family, hitched him with a horse to a wagon, and compelled him to haul several loads of wood for fuel for his family. Then they put him in a stall and forced him to eat six ears of horse corn.

Man Kills One-hundred-pound Wolf.

An exceptionally large number of wolves have been killed in Keweenaw County, Mich. The board of supervisors at its last meeting authorized the payment of $250 in bounties. The biggest wolf dispatched in Keweenaw County in years was killed near the Cliff mine recently by August Raisanen. The carcass weighed one hundred pounds.

Fights Duel for United States Honor.

The story of a duel, fought in Germany "for the honor of the United States" was told in a letter received at Wichita, Kans., from Werner Phillipp, a German lieutenant of sharpshooters.

Phillipp, the son of Doctor Herman Phillipp, of Wich-

ita, is a captain, and returned to Germany at the outbreak of the war. When a fellow German spoke slightingly of the United States, Phillipp challenged him to a duel, according to the letter. He split his opponent's cheek and received a cut on his sword hand, the letter said.

Burned While Family Slept.

Mrs. Thomas Quinton, wife of a merchant at Mill Creek, Okla., was burned to death while her husband and six children slept in an adjoining room. She apparently was stricken with heart disease while sitting by a fire.

See What's Been Found Now!

While excavating in a gravel pit near Temple, Tex., workmen unearthed the jawbone of a prehistoric animal that students of ethnology declare to be a dinotherium. The find was uncovered at a depth of ten feet. The bone and teeth, twenty-four in all of the latter, are well preserved.

Excavation was immediately suspended, pending the working out of plans to carefully proceed with the work, so that the entire skeleton may be taken from the ground without damage.

Swallows His Toothbrush.

James Skeffington, of the Providence, R. I., School Committee was polishing his teeth when his grip on the handle of the brush slipped. The brush went down his throat so far he could not reach it. Involuntarily he swallowed it.

Mr. Skeffington caused a call to be sent to the Rhode Island Hospital, whither he was taken, and the doctors lost no time in operating upon him. The brush was removed from his stomach and the patient it reported as doing finely.

Minnesota Seeks Belgians.

The first step in the movement to secure a Belgian settlement in the agricultural districts of St. Louis County, recruited from the war sufferers of Belgium, was taken when Madame Phillipine Artois, a Belgian woman, presented her colonization plan before the agricultural committee of the Duluth Commercial Club and others interested in the plan at Duluth, Minn.

Impetus was given the scheme when, at the close of Madame Artois' lecture J. L. Washburn, in behalf of a Boston land company, offered 300 acres of land to be used for the purpose.

Madame Artois has been in the city several days while on her trip throughout the United States as a free-lance lecturer in behalf of the war sufferers of her country.

Wrestler Quits at Forty-eight.

George Bothner, who for years has been known as the "Handicap King" of wrestling, has retired. Unlike many, who never know when to quit until it is too late, Bothner retires when he is still at the top, flushed with a final taste of victory. His last match was with Tarro Miyake, whom he defeated. The *Blade* showed his picture in connection with the story of how he won over the clever Jap at New York.

In throwing Miyake, Bothner, who is in his forty-eighth year, showed the same skill and generalship which marked his earlier career. Many times he has won under the handicap of odds that would have discouraged most men. He is regarded as one of the greatest exponents of scientific wrestling. He was never a very strong man, and his play on the mat was in large part defensive. He soon learned that he must have qualities which the others could not match, and the leg work began to come to him almost instinctively, until it reached the point of perfection.

Champions are very indefinite things, and in wrestling is that particularly true. Bothner is called the lightweight champion by practically everybody who is a follower of the sport, even though he is no more in that class. Most of his bouts, however, were at the lightweight limit, and the tendency still to consider him in that class persists. During his thirty-five years on the mat he has taken part in more than 200 bouts, and he has not always stayed in his class. He has wrestled heavyweights as well as lightweights, and by going against the big, husky fellows, who agreed to throw him in a specified time, he was known as the "Handicap King." He was king because they failed, and it was this that made his defensive work such an important factor in his plans of campaign.

Fear never entered Bothner. About seven years ago jujutsu wrestling first commanded attention in this country, and a number of Japanese came here to demonstrate how they could break arms and legs, and demanded a recognition of their work as a decided advance over our old style of wrestling. Many of the wrestlers of the day were scared by the tales, and would have nothing to do with the new science of self-defense, and the Japanese talked to their hearts' content. Bothner, however, went to one of the New York theaters and tried to get a bout with one of the Japs, who was offering to put anything out in five minutes or forfeit a money consideration. The manager would not accept Bothner during the performance, but consented to a match after the theater was closed. Two nights Bothner went to the theater, but the Japs skipped away, without a trial of skill. At the time Bothner was an instructor at Princeton, and Higashi, one of the jujutsu wrestlers, came there once a week to give lessons. A bout was finally arranged between the two, to be held at Grand Central Palace.

The Japanese demanded that Bothner wear a kimono, and also that he sign a paper which would exonerate the Jap should he seriously injure Bothner. Bothner was bound to have a bout, but as a precautionary measure he took out the night before the event a $1,000 insurance policy. The bout was probably the only one of its kind ever held in this country. There was no hold that was barred. One man could strangle the other if he wished. Bothner finally won two straight falls, which were long drawn out, for the Jap was the victim of one of Bothner's toe holds, by which the first fall was secured, and was wary thereafter.

Bothner first started in the wrestling game when he was thirteen years old. He had inherited a liking for athletics from his father, Carl Bothner, who was a gymnastic instructor in Germany and later at the New York Turn Verein. It was at the latter place that he started his career. When he was eighteen he joined the Pastime Athletic Club, and in 1885 came under the notice of Jimmie Hughes, then a national title holder, who gave him many of the fine points of the game. He won several tournaments and captured the 125, 135 and 158-pound titles, the first and second the same year.

In 1896 Bothner took a position at the New York Athletic Club as assistant to Hugh Leonard, thus enter-

ing upon his professional career. He won the lightweight championship when he defeated Tom Riley in 1899. The latter had come here fresh from a victory in England, when he won the Lord Lonsdale belt. The two wrestled in this city for a belt emblematic of the championship of the world, the last to be offered, and Bothner won with two straight falls. He twice successfully defended it, once against Max Luttberg, of St. Louis, in a bout at Scranton, and against Harvey Parker, of Brockton, in a bout in New York.

Crew Owed Lives to Second Mate.

When the iron bark *Pilgrim* went over on her beam ends on December 13th, in a stiff southeaster, Captain Soria knew it was all off. He didn't need any squarehead of a sailor man to tell him what to do, so he and the mate went up on the poop and stayed there while the *Pilgrim* tossed furiously in the trough of the sea.

Now, the skipper didn't know the mettle of his second mate, but, anyhow, he let him do his best to save the bark, while he and the first mate looked on from their perch.

This third-in-command fellow, whose name is Gustav Blecksmith, came in recently from Liverpool on the American liner *St. Louis,* with twelve of his shipmates, and all had something to say about the loss of the *Pilgrim* and the ingenuity of her second mate. It was a long yarn of the sea, but it ended happily, with the exception that one man lost his life.

The *Pilgrim,* which left the ways at Port Glasgow in 1893, was first named the *Gael,* and flew the British flag. Her Boston owners recently put her under the American flag and named her the *Pilgrim.* She went out of Norfolk on December 13th, laden with pebbles—a mighty slippery and shifty ballast, the crew said—and promptly encountered a terrific southeaster.

She had been sailing by the wind and was doing well, when the pebbles began to roll. The gale invited them repeatedly to shift, and when one particularly heavy gust came along, they could not resist and piled up furiously to port, and the *Pilgrim* was on her beam ends.

Her nimble sailors were not trapped, however, as they were looking for what happened, and calmly walked along the plates of her starboard side. Calmly the skipper and his mate foregathered on the poop, and for all that is known by outsiders were handling the situation masterfully; but the crew pushed forward the second mate, Blecksmith, and asked him to tell just what he did.

"Kind of on my own initiative," said the second mate modestly, "I shouted, 'All hands on deck!' They were there, all right, but I looked kind of at the master and the mate, and they said nothing. That seemed good, so I gave another order. 'Get ready to cut away the topmasts,' I said; and again the skipper and the mate said nothing. They knew well enough that to chop away the topmasts we'd have to have axes.

"These were in the carpenter shop, and the carpenter shop was under water. I knew it, too, but the mate and the skipper said nothing, so I got ready my bowlines and we lowered some men into the shop. They did good work and soon came up with the axes. I gave a look at the two men on the poop, but they merely eyed us. Then I said: 'We've got to cut 'em away if we want to save her.'

"Then the mate said something. It was the first time he yapped. He said: 'Tain't no use. She's gone.' He talked kind of decentlike, and that sounded good to us and made the men chop like fiends. We got the shrouds loose and the topmasts free, and she came over about four feet. Then I looked over to the poop and shouted: 'What do you think of it now?' The mate looked sorrowful and answered: 'It's no go, I tell ye.'

"'Well,' said I, 'let's work for our lives, anyway. Boys, we'll try and shovel the ballast to starboard.' Up on the poop I guess they thought we were fools, but we got busy and shifted enough pebbles to make the *Pilgrim* more steady. Then I went up aft with the master and the mate and took a rest."

A tar barrel was set on fire from the *Pilgrim's* stern. It was a good flare, for it caught the eye of Captain Brunn, of the Norwegian steamship *Tholma,* and he came on at full speed for the wrecked bark. At daylight, on December 15th, the men were taken aboard and landed at Kirkwald, Scotland. The rescue was made in latitude 35:58 north, longitude 65:37 west.

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